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ABSTRACT

The outdoor education literature reveals little on the values of outdoor education activities. The values of aesthetic education can readily be ascribed to values of an outdoor mountain experience--visual, plastic, musical, kinetic, verbal, and constructive. These values are related through senses, muscles, speech, and thought to form expression. In addition to beauty and the aesthetics of an outdoor mountain experience, the freedom felt in the wild country, with its isolation, provides an escape from everyday life, time for self appraisal, and a place to be alone. The Field Studies Council's desire to extend the intellect of a student, the Councils of Physical Recreation's offer to develop physical skills, and the Outward Bound Trust's design for social improvement, are all worthy ends, but they are not the only ends. Unless the teaching or provision of experience is informed by serious appreciation of what is possible outside these three avenues, the benefits hoped for might be equally gained in other contexts at less expense in money, time, and risk. (AH)

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EDUCATION AND THE MOUNTAIN CENTRES

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EDUCATION AND WILD COUNTRY

1.

For most of the last decade it has seemed inevitable that the rate of development in the promotion of outdoor activities for young people must shortly slacken off and that this aspect of education must attain some sort of stable state. Yet, just when it has been made evident that the safety problem in this sphere has not been solved and the right approach to that problem perhaps not even discovered, so that one would have expected the whole enterprise to be called into question—just at this time it is perfectly clear that interest is increasing and development accelerating at a new tempo; and that there is a commitment to the idea on a scale so large that whilst the project might be reshaped it could hardly be abandoned. In all the mountain regions of Britain the adventure industry is in full swing. The several responsible bodies that have tried in turn to compile a simple list of Mountain Centres have each had to admit that their surveys have been seriously out of date before they appeared in print. The first descriptive report of the Department of Education and Science is tentative and cautious in its notes on the supposed values of the work, as though Her Majesty's Inspectors feared that they might be a little out of their depths or standing at any rate on shifting ground. Centre Wardens are plagued with questionnaires from students writing theses on outdoor education and are forever having to decline the honour of contributing a chapter or so on aims and purposes towards each writer's effort. But it is inexcusable that there should be so little available in writing on the subject. Not only do we lack any broad explanation of the activity taking place; but also, more seriously, the partisans of some approaches, including that advertised here, have never thought it important to offer their ideas in print.

In order to secure some points of agreement this essay begins with a glance over the whole field of educational activitity in wild country: but that is not its essential purpose, which is to defend a particular approach to recreational mountain activities against threats or encroachments of two kinds. On the one hand from other aspects of outdoor education which may be worthy undertakings in themselves but which, having ends that are easy to understand and that secure immediate support, have overshadowed what I think to be more important possibilities; and on the other, from certain unimaginative and restrictive tendencies within. So I am attempting to draw attention to what seem to me to be at once the most important and the most neglected values in outdoor education. I would like to enlist the assistance or to provoke the rejoinder of anyone able to contribute to the development of a more

satisfactory theory of value in this field. Finally I hope for a re-appraisal of method and a shift of emphasis in outdoor education generally.

At this point, regrettably, I find it necessary to insert a note on education itself. It is a pity to have to test the temper of the reader at so early a stage and I certainly want to avoid an exhausting struggle with meanings. But a short note here might prevent misunderstandings and the very briefest definition on record may serve to bring out some crucial points. For brevity, whilst remaining traditional in approach, I do not know that anyone has improved on C. K. Ogden's note—"Education: expansion of experience by experts." So we might begin by narrowing this last remark by noting that not all of our experience is valuable. Whilst Ogden no doubt intended that his experts attend to this point we know that experts often disagree and so it is essential that everyone feels free to comment on their evaluations, an open-ended process. But this does not detain me since this essay is itself a description of experiences which are proposed as valuable and so that difficulty is passed on immediately to the reader. But we have to continue by extending Ogden's definition because experience can surely be expanded without calling upon experts or, indeed, upon anyone. It can be expanded with Nature as your teacher: or, more properly, it can be expanded in a variety of ways, amongst which the exercise of intelligence is one—I nearly said "is only one"—through the individual's experiencing of Nature. This suggests incidentally, that in some educational situations there may be a certain redundancy about the teacher's role and correspondingly of course, in so far as their work pertains to these moments, a super-redundancy amongst the advisory and administrative echelons. I am sorry about that but it cannot be helped. With a bit of ingenuity some alternative employment will certainly be found.

For the purposes of this essay then, education means: (the transmission of) non-harmful experience to extend and/or better organise experience already stored. Something like that. This will appear to the professionals to be an appallingly loose definition. However, I have to confess now that I cannot even stretch it to cover all the kinds of experience I want to consider as having value. For some of them—chiefly in satisfaction of various types of appetite—whilst valuable in a unique and uninterchangeable sense are not educational. To illustrate the point briefly: to a person with musical tastes the first hearing of a symphony by an unknown composer might be an educational experience; but to the same person the tenth or hundredth hearing of that symphony, whilst not an educational experience in this sense, might still be an

enjoyable and, I say, a valuable experience. I see now that the title of this essay is merely an eye-catcher. I am going to write about Values and the Mountain Centres. But since education is usually taken to mean transactions between teachers and students and experiences arranged by teachers for students I will not alter the title. (I have decided at this point to avoid a definition of value. Better to leave the subject with a thought from Wittgenstein : "the meaning of a word is its use.")

2.

To dispose now of further boring preliminaries. Discussion of the use of wild country for educational purposes usually contrives to divide activity into two groups. First we have Field Studies or Environmental Education by which we almost invariably mean geographical or biological studies or an attempt at a general or partial combination of their sub-disciplines. (The more difficult the terrain, the less material for historical fieldwork, the less likelihood that the landscape painter will find it necessary to carry his impedimenta very far, and so on.) Second, we have Outdoor Pursuits or Adventure Activities or Adventure Sports or, as the French say, Nature Sports; by which we mean such recreational pastimes as hill-walking, rock-climbing, mountain camping, some aspects of skiing and even of canoeing—whether these activities are offered for their intrinsic interest or for some ulterior motive.

The two approaches have sometimes been deliberately combined at a moderate level of performance with great success; they have sometimes been combined successfully at a high level in one aspect and a low level in the other, either way round; and they have sometimes been combined in serial form, a bit of one, then a bit of the other—though in what sense this constitutes a combination is open to question. There are attempts from time to time. sometimes curiously anxious ones, to combine the two in a permanent and static relationship; and there are attempts from time to time, usually fairly transparent ones, to incorporate as much as possible of one within the other, perhaps under some new title. But the two approaches seem to resist a complete and self-justifying synthesis. It is no more possible to cover both at the highest level simultaneously than to make careful observations on the migration of birds while playing a game of football. The more we do of one, the less we do of the other. Again, the usefulness of any attempted combination appears to be a little one-sided. To a botanist interested in the relict flora found on British mountains some expertise in rock-climbing and even some familiarity with rope techniques might be of assistance; but to a climber working out a limestone escarpment an acquaintance with geology is unlikely to give him

more assistance than his hands and eyes. In fact, a convincing argument for the priority of a combination of adventure sports and fieldwork over the one or the other in isolation has yet to be advanced. At the moment it is hard to see how it could be advanced since the indisputable values of each aspect are qualitatively different and there is no common scale against which both can be assessed.

3.

At this stage one has to agree that in practising adventure sports purely for pleasure one cannot avoid observing nature continuously; and that in carrying out fieldwork projects in wild country some walking and perhaps some scrambling may be found essential. But occasionally one finds young people, walking up to a rock-climb perhaps, who keep up a stream of questions about the natural history of the area, the evidence of sheep farming or copper mining or whatever takes their eye; and there is no doubt that their involvement is greater, that they are being educated more effectively, than the rearmost members of some of the groups one sees straggling behind their teachers from halt to halt along a nature trail. One sees also fieldwork parties which climb a mountain ostensibly for fieldwork purposes—but climb it with far more enjoyment than some groups burdened down with survival gear and engaged in some "adventure scheme" planned to the last detail. These successful combinations are the informal equivalents of the deliberate "combinations at a moderate level of performance" already mentioned. There seems, though, to be a demarcation dispute or a question of definition here. Young people will in fact classify the activities themselves according to their impression of the teacher's intention and they are not easily misled about that. But interesting distinctions are disguised. In the outdoor pursuits situation in which the youngster is assimilating other material it is true that in many cases he would receive it differently if he had been taken there solely for that purpose. In the fieldwork situation, however, the student is usually conscious that he has been offered a slight respite from academic activity; that this relief has been programmed for him by his teacher.

I do not intend to pursue these distinctions any further here because I want to suggest shortly that the division is an unfortunate one. I do not believe that the two aspects make up the entirety of the possibilities of outdoor education : as though they were two sides of the same coin, or, a more commonly used metaphor, two sides of a fence on which those who are troubled by doubts might find a perch. Rather, I think that we should pay attention to the important values in which the aspirations of both aspects should meet.

DECLARED AIMS: ANCILLARY BENEFITS: ULTERIOR MOTIVES

1.

I want to examine the purposes and values of these approaches in a little detail now and I will consider fieldwork first. In fact the use of wild country for fieldwork does not need an apology. Ever since the first classrooms were built teachers have surprised themselves, or have been surprised, in the act of gazing out of the windows. In many schools situated within easy reach of wild country a tradition of an odd day's excursion to look at real things is quite ancient. As a recognisable method, fieldwork has always been destined to supplement classroom teaching the moment the easing of travel and the availability of money makes some worthwhile objective feasible. Arguably, in a given time some youngsters can cover a great deal more ground in the classroom and make sense of it; for others, for the majority perhaps, things are only understood if they are seen rather than described or represented.

The aim of fieldwork in wild country is to comprehend the structure and detail of the natural world; to determine what processes, including the traces of man's action, have brought it to its present state; to predict what changes nature and man may effect in the future. Ideally, the field student's understanding is not purely of the intellect but incorporates a physical, almost tactile familiarity, won through the senses and the muscles. The wilder the country and the more untouched by man, the more easily are the major causes and effects isolated. For younger children fieldwork satisfies an indiscriminate curiosity delightfully. For adolescents and adults its appeal is plainly to truth; and making use of reason, memory and scientific method it fits squarely within the dynamic through which the material advancement of Western civilisation has come about. Lately, too, it has gained powerful support and the impetus of urgency from the fitting-together of more and more information about the imbalances man's exploitation and carelessness are creating in the environment; from the realisation that already some of this damage is irreversible and from the evidence that population growth and technology have introduced an exponential factor into the situation. In response to this a conservationist approach exerts more and more influence both amongst fieldworkers and, through their example, amongst a steadily increasing proportion of other users of the countryside. There is no need, then, for an educational justification for fieldwork in wild country; its virtues are obvious to everyone.

2.

By contrast the outdoor pursuits field comprises a range of approaches and some differences of aim are apparent. The degree to which the objectives of particular movements or enterprises have been expressed seems to depend upon an interaction of factors. First, the more difficult it is to secure the necessary financial support, the more attention must be paid to the clarification and exposition of aims and purposes. Second, the greater the apparent hazards involved and the more arduous the level of physical severity programmed, the more important it becomes to show what ends justify the means. But operating against any such explanations is the fact that Mountain Centres appear to have shown themselves in practice in an astonishingly short time to be extremely valuable—or, perhaps, to be irresistibly in vogue. A Local Education Authority considering the acquisition of a Centre today no longer seems to question the purpose and value of the institution : its representatives go instead to look at a selection of Centres in operation and this inspection usually seems to satisfy them.

Amongst all the activity to be seen, however, two tendencies stand out clearly. These are, first, a concentration upon the teaching of physical skills and the technical knowledge to support them : this approach being related to the pleasure principle even if apparently, sometimes, at one or two removes. And, second, the same basic teaching utilised in an attempt to make the student a better or a more useful person, as judged by those offering the service : "character building." The first of these approaches may be seen on all sides but is perhaps best represented in the work of the Centres administered by the Councils of Physical Recreation, since other claims are not strongly emphasised there; the second, in the Schools maintained by the Outward Bound Trust, as originally seen in Britain at any rate. Although the range of activities offered in each approach is almost identical the similarity is rather superficial; a consumer survey, very likely, would reveal some distinctions. Numerically the two CPR Mountain Centres and the six Outward Bound Schools now represent only a minute fraction of the activity taking place but the approaches exemplified by them have had great influence whether through action or reaction. It might be argued that the mainstream development in outdoor pursuits is best seen now in the work of Local Education Authority Centres; but although a general identity of purpose is apparent amongst them there is also a pronounced eclecticism about their style so that the general background is best understood by isolating the two approaches referred to and describing them in turn.

3.

Whereas the move from classroom study to fieldwork in wild country was teacher-inspired and awaited, as a large-scale phenomenon, the availability of comparatively cheaper and faster transport, the incorporation of outdoor pursuits into the general educational framework followed the wave of popularity which these activities found with young people just after the war. In fact, especially for physical educationists, who were disconcerted to find that a revolution had taken place behind their backs, the recognition of the educational value and interest of these activities constituted a notable act of recovery. Before the war, mountaineering was for the rich or for the professional classes at least; the tiny body of working class climbers, restricted to particular localities, escaped attention. Rambling and youth hostelling, though large-scale movements, were not regarded as comparable with ordinary competitive sport. But shortly after the war a vigorous generation of young climbers appeared, ready to travel anywhere by any means: and this movement showed a remarkable growth rate which has continued to the present day.

In the fifties the exploits of these climbers began to secure wider publicity and a certain prestige. It became apparent, too, that the achievements of the most advanced practitioners represented degrees of stamina, strength, nicety of judgement, drive, experience and commitment, which made these undertakings comparable with the most exacting tests to which the human body has ever been submitted. At the same time, in a remarkable reversal of roles, most of these young people regarded traditional sports and athletics as comical or old-fashioned. The new sports were certainly, in one sense, physical education. And the first steps in these activities could clearly be taught to young people.

Clearly, too, it was arguable that these first steps *must* be taught to young people anxious to engage in the adventure sports. For whereas, in earlier years, recruitment and instruction had been a person to person affair, the publicity mentioned led—owing to the characteristic insularity of British climbing clubs—to a state of affairs in which a large proportion of beginners, a majority possibly, were having to teach themselves. It was claimed that the results of this tendency were to be seen in accident statistics. And even if the increase in accidents was more directly related to the increase in numbers, it was true that in every mishap an obvious mistake could be identified. Many of these mistakes appeared to stem from lack of knowledge of basic equipment and techniques. It was urged, then, that there was a responsibility to educate the young in safe practices in travel in wild country.

When the idea was examined a multitude of arguments recommending the encouragement of adventure sports became evident. From the end of the war a dream or perhaps a nightmare of more and more leisure occupied men's minds. The concentration of employment in the cities, the tendency of much of this employment towards reduced physical demand at the price of an increased and monotonous specialisation, the clear impossibility of providing sufficient facilities for traditional sports for everyone, the easing of travel—these factors combined to favour the use of the countryside and the pastimes it offers.

Then, set against the non-participatory nature of most urban leisure activities there followed the point that the adventure sports are not spectator sports. They can be practised until late in life with the same enjoyment as in youth because the level of satisfaction is not necessarily subject to external standards but depends rather upon an internal reconciliation of ability, desire and fear. They are undoubtably more beneficial to the general health if practised regularly than are formal games: simply because they work through a prolonged and natural time-span, usually a full day, rather than through a brief arbitrary period; they tend to take place in a cleaner and more invigorating air; they use the body more flexibly and generally, and so on. Deceptively, it appears that they sometimes produce an immediate improvement in physical fitness, quite noticeable by the end of a week's course perhaps. In fact this usually means that the body's latent powers—its capacity for walking much greater distances than urban life demands, for example—have been discovered or re-discovered: but it is a useful and pleasing discovery.

A further factor contributing to the support found for adventure sports came through a focussing of public attention upon the generalised problems of adolescence. This may have been in part one of the curious upsurges of anxiety that the young arouse in their elders from time to time; but certainly during the years after the war the mass media did begin to present a picture of a serious and always growing delinquency problem among teenagers. It was plain enough that some aspects of these difficulties were related quite directly to overcrowding in cities and to the need for an outlet for youthful exuberance. The new sports appear to have seemed to some, however, to offer an excellent method of burning up energy which might else be expended more tiresomely in forms of behaviour not everywhere classified as delinquent—in sexuality or political activism perhaps—of allowing the discharge of this energy in an arena in which a great deal less nuisance, damage or conflict might

result. This wish, implicit rather than expressed, seemed to be not so much a faith in the character building possibilities of nature as in part a hope for the therapeutic properties of exercise and in part a desire to have problems happen somewhere else—the "Why don't they go away?" syndrome. The idea is not so naive as might appear, stated so baldly. The first rage of enthusiasm for the adventure sports tends in many young people to have a quality of fanaticism about it. Many youngsters will miss a good deal of sleep and opt out of exciting social (or anti-social) activities to secure a full weekend in the hills: some with little previous interest in reading start to haunt libraries and spend evening after evening poring over climbers' guidebooks and the classics of mountaineering literature. How much society gains and how much it loses depends upon one's point of view. On the other hand the open-air movement of the years just after the war anticipated the permissive society quite remarkably—whilst, curiously, more conformist attitudes have become apparent in the last decade.

Other observations which, surprisingly, do not seem to have been offered are of interest in relation to the skills aspect of adventure sports. For instance, compared with the artificiality of urban life and sport, the naturalness of these pursuits is striking and is evident to everyone. But it is not just that the rules and implements are not the fruit of free invention—a curious object to be struck with an equally curious object, a precisely defined area specified for this horseplay, a bizarre complication of rules; it is not even that the apparatus and techniques are a reflection of the terrain in use; rather, the sense of naturalness springs from an awareness that at every level of performance the apparently specialised implements are types of the basic tools of man's emergence. Boots, anoraks, packs, tents and ropes are amongst his first and most important artefacts; the ice-axe is only a sort of axe, the piton hammer a kind of hammer. The satisfaction felt in the skills stems from an intuitive recognition of their inherent purposiveness and universality.

Finally, it has not been sufficiently emphasised that the acquisition of these recreational skills involves demands upon the intellect far greater than may be at first apparent. Map-reading is perhaps the finest of non-verbal intelligence tests and it is at its most difficult in certain types of mountain terrain rather than simply in country that is featureless or unmarked by man—when the ability to take and hold a compass course may be all that is required. We tend to think of an Abney level, say, as a sophisticated and complicated instrument because it is a specialised instrument and of a Primus stove as a simple tool that can misbehave annoyingly: but

at any level, from the competent handling to the mathematics or physics of the design, if we were to choose to study these, the two are of about the same order of difficulty. In fact it could easily be argued that a day spent in the ascent of a difficult rock climb makes demands upon the intelligence quite comparable with those of a day spent in looking at glaciological evidence or in carrying out a vegetation or land use survey.

4.

In contrast to the teaching of physical skills as an end in itself the approach characterised by the Outward Bound Trust is based upon concepts of what is good, useful or valuable in the individual and upon the development of these virtues for the general benefit of society. This approach may have marginally preceded the unapologetic teaching of recreational skills, perhaps because giving students what is good for them has always been a more respectable educational aim than giving them what they enjoy.

There are certainly slight divergences of opinion amongst the proponents of the Outward Bound idea. Some regard the encouragement of adventure sports as a proper end in itself; others have often insisted that the courses should be regarded as training and not as recreation. In the early years of the movement a good deal of support came from people who saw the courses as preparation for a career at sea or as an introduction to survival techniques which might be valuable in the prosecution of the war. Later, perhaps with the establishment of the first Outward Bound Mountain School and with the withdrawal of Britain from serious military adventures, this view became more difficult to hold. Yet there were clearly very close parallels between activities and methods at the Trust's Mountain and Sea Schools. The end, then, has to some extent been restated and set more distant. Briefly it has been proposed as "the strengthening of the individual through contact with the forces of nature." When one asks whether this might not also be an aim of physical educationists simply through the teaching of physical skills it becomes clear that the strengthening intended is as much of the character and personality as of the body. The Trust is interested in the development of "self-confidence, self-help and self-discipline." It sets up as its ideals love of adventure, courage, endurance, self-sacrifice, service. It could lay claim to all the benefits previously described as inherent in adventure sports as recreation but though it works through these skills it has other ends in mind.

Its methods, which lend Outward Bound courses their distinctive tone, are intended to help entrants realise these qualities

in themselves. And certainly situations can be created to bring out unsuspected capabilities or characteristics in young people. Of any group it is possible to say that in ordinary life such a one has a gift of leadership or reliability or tenacity or consideration or whatever; on exposing this group to unfamiliar situations and trying circumstances these assessments will often be seen to shift within the group quite dramatically. The self-knowledge this brings can only be valuable.

5.

Certainly for the writer, and probably for the reader, this has been a tedious preamble to his argument : but now he has announcements to make. Having crudely ascribed to the Field Studies Council, if you like, a desire to extend the intellect of the student, to the Councils for Physical Recreation an offer to develop his physical skills, and to the Outward Bound Trust a design for his social improvement, I make haste to enter the claim that these worthy ends are not the only ends : that unless the teaching or the provision of experience is informed by a serious appreciation of what is possible outside these three avenues, the benefits hoped for might equally be gained in other contexts at less expense in money, time and risk.

AESTHETIC VALUES

1.

In the manifesto of every body that concerns itself with outdoor education a reference to the beauty of the natural world or a space for the admission that this beauty has importance will be found. But search as you will you cannot find a serious consideration of the idea anywhere. It is a reminder in a Constitution, a part of a clause in a Memorandum of Association, a brief aside in a brochure. Possibly this lack of attention signifies that most of the people working in this field do not regard beauty as a subject lending itself to rational discussion and extensive examination: they are accustomed by training or perhaps by the temperament that led them to choose that training to dealing with matters in which the subjectivity of the observer may threaten the whole enquiry. In particular one meets physical educationists and earth and life scientists who think that beauty cannot be discussed at all without recourse to dubious psychological, mystical or religious values; and though all acknowledge a mystery of some sort many would rather leave it untouched than risk an uncertain logic.

But it *is* possible to talk about aesthetic matters meaningfully. The immense literature of criticism steadily works towards this end. Its areas of disagreement are not wider than those of such exact sciences as astronomy—or of biology or geology for that matter; its areas of agreement (on what is valuable in analogy with what is true) secure, if the whole field is considered, as general a consensus. Aesthetic problems can be explored intelligently, though qualities additional to intelligence will be required, in a language based upon observation and common sense but qualified and extended by advances in a number of fields—psychology, anthropology, linguistic philosophy, and, especially, in semantics. The present writer, it ought to be added here, cannot offer to conduct excursions into all those areas; but he has caught a few glimpses of significant relationships, bearing finally on the matter of this essay.

Perhaps at this point it may be worth introducing a warning, a reminder to the writer as well as to the reader. We often say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder but we rarely talk as though it were. It is necessary here, for brevity and for immediate intelligibility, to talk about the beauty of landscape and similar matters. But beauty is not a property existing in landscapes: our remarks describe our responses to what is outside ourselves. If similar responses are found to be common to most of us we project the effect as a quality of the matter causing it and we easily forget how

continuously and naturally we make this projection. The tendency gives, as Richards says, "a peculiar obliquity to thought." We have to check ourselves from time to time.

2.

It seems to me that outdoor education could best extend itself and free itself of certain constraints by considering its analogies with the enjoyment of the arts and by examining theories about the arts. In selecting a method of approach we might best start, perhaps, by looking for correspondences in the more ambitious and comprehensive theoretical works of our own century even though these, as well as the counterattacks they inevitably provoke, will no doubt require qualification in the future. I find in such treatises as Richards' *Principles of Literary Criticism* and Read's *Education Through Art* numerous insights relevant to outdoor education. And I am sure that some points of divergence will be found to be just as thought—provoking as the lines of correspondence.

Let me take an example from Read's book. I have suggested very briefly a number of values to be found in rock-climbing from a physical or compensatory point of view. But the activity fits better into an aesthetic theory than into a skills theory. Read divides the techniques of aesthetic education into a number of distinct aspects: visual, plastic, musical, kinetic, verbal and constructive. He relates these through the senses, muscles, speech and thought to forms of expression. And he then qualifies his scheme with the remark that in practice it is often difficult to separate the visual and plastic aspects.

We can test this scheme tentatively upon the experience of the climber. The visual: his time is divided more or less equally between periods when he is stationary and engaged in protecting his companion and periods when he is climbing and the other is belaying him. In the first, his eye moves freely between what is general and what is local, at one moment ranging over the entire landscape to the horizon, at the next working back to the cliff structure, the setting of the pitch upon it and the progress of the other climber on the pitch; in the second phase the eye moves between the local and the particular, from the line of the pitch to an inspection of minute finger and toe holds. This span of visual awareness, continued through a period of hours in regular sequences of concentration and relaxation, extending from the small detail to the entire vista, must be nearly unique in human activity. It encompasses all painters' dreams of form and colour. At the narrow end of the scale the detail is apprehended as plastic—or

tactile, we may prefer to say—as well as visual and we agree Read's point. The climber tries with finger-tips as well as eye the shape, angle, smoothness of the next hold, questions its lichen or its friability. And his whole interpretation of the cliff structure fits within this class of combined visual and plastic experience, like a sense of appreciation of architectural masses which is based upon the body's familiarity with the medium rather than entirely upon the eye's assessments.

A whole chapter might be written about the kinetic aspects of rock-climbing, though we would describe them as kinaesthetic aspects nowadays. The climber's lonely dance is infinitely expressive. The cliff writes the choreography, the weather re-interprets it, the climber reveals himself through it in his performance. In one situation poise, grace and elegance of movement; in another, power, labour or unswerving drive; but any reflection of personality and ability including the most unflattering ones. Through repetition and an understanding of the possibilities the action comes to have a force and tradition like the stylised movements of drama or mime. Even the handling of the rope, the application of slings and snap-links, the placing of a piton, suggests a quality of ritual or ceremony.

The musical: it might seem to be non-existent. But all sounds have to be set against silence—which, perhaps, is a part of music and has its own weight and value. The sounds of the mountain are an integral part of its qualities of space and atmosphere. In storm the wind's violence can stir every response in men, from the purest joy to the keenest apprehension. In calm, the distancing and isolating of the occasional sound of man, wild creature, stream or avalanche brings out its uniqueness. It is the sort of silence in which to learn to hear afresh.

It might be thought that this comparison can be stretched no further and to some extent this is true. But more interesting questions have already arisen. Read's analysis carries across from his types of aesthetic education to appropriate forms of expression. In this case climbing is itself the form of expression and clearly it has a far larger and more diverse input through the senses and a more co-ordinated programming through the faculties than some of the forms Read discusses. The closer we look at it, the more the possibilities proliferate.

Consider climbing, for instance, as a creative act. I find it easiest to use a personal illustration here. Over a fair period of time I have put a sum of effort into the ascent of unclimbed lines on cliffs and mountains of varying degrees of difficulty. Over a

similar period of time I have put occasional efforts, comparable in some ways, into the writing of poetry. I am ready to claim a modest success in these enterprises though the authorities in each field might hope I had done better in the other: but that is irrelevant anyway. Now the experience of those who have read these poems was necessarily different from my experience in writing them. But the experience of those who have repeated the climbs must have been much more nearly mine in making them. And the experience of making them was, I insist, a creative experience, comparable in many particulars with the struggle to communicate in writing. So that I have to regard much of climbing as a form of expression of a high order of significance, having about it a quality of certainty, dealing with a material sometimes unresisting, at others for the aim intended ultimately intractable, a material in other words very like language. And each climb being more or less discrete, unique and enduring: like a work of art.

3.

Now to say that climbing is a creative act is one thing; but to say that a climb is like a work of art is quite another. To some it will seem that the comparison is good only within a very limited area of overlap. But I want to claim that the likeness is extensive and important and so I represent the suggestion one step at a time.

First, it surely has to be agreed that mountains and cliffs often impress us in the same ways as the great achievements of such arts as sculpture and architecture. In fact we often have no choice in describing them but to resort to comparison with these arts or achievements. This tendency is very evident in the early records of mountaineering in the form of conscious analogies. Modern writers are more likely to use these metaphors unconsciously but even today we find, for instance, A.D.M. Cox having to liken the two great buttresses of Clogwyn du'r Arddu to medieval fortress and cathedral in order to try to capture their fascinating antithesis of form. For every unnamed mountain which becomes Someone's Peak, another becomes Somebody's Tower or Spire or Dome or Pyramid. Its features are described and named as buttresses or pillars or ridges or walls or columns. These tectonic metaphors are the natural expression of our process of thought.

Or, instead of seeing the present shape of the mountain as resembling a type or feature of building we are struck by the way it has been carved from a greater form. We do not have to anthropomorphise a titanic sculptor to see the sculptural qualities of mountains. We think of the forces of wind, water, ice and lightning as tools

because there is evidence everywhere of how the rock is being ground down, split, hammered, washed and crushed—nature's processes which man appropriates and forgets where they came from.

But there is a limit to the reach of these metaphors. In fact it might be claimed that cliffs and mountains are facades without shape or dimension until they are floodlit by human effort. Just as the Prince wakes the Sleeping Beauty so the climber's touch brings the cliff to life. The more it is worked over, the more aspects are revealed and the more secrets suggested. And this mystery is never diminished. Every storm, every change in the weather resurrects and reasserts it.

To see the extent to which climbing invests mountains with significance, consider a hypothetical problem: how to write a symphony using as inspiration the North Face of the Eiger. Before the nineteen-thirties this proposition would have seemed an intangible and hollow exercise. But one can imagine that today a piece of music might easily utilise as theme the 1938 route and would not strike many composers, especially those working in cinema, as too daunting an undertaking—the chief artistic problem might well be the avoidance of cliches, Wagnerian passages, a spacious exit, and so forth.

Climbs interpret mountain faces. A climb is the most human relationship possible with a mountain face. Climbs amplify the persona of a mountain. The more effort has been expended, the more increment to the mountain's character. The Hörnli Ridge is not desecrated by those half million climbers who have ascended it. It is hallowed. The mountain might indeed be considered a holy place, as in many cultures it has been. The climber reveres each detail, he knows it as a monk knows his abbey or as the curator of an historic monument knows the parts of his building. Even on the meanest gritstone escarpment on the darkest foggiest winter afternoon he tells off the buttresses, corners and gullies one after the other, name by name or presence by presence as he passes underneath them. And every feature is charged with meaning.

In descending the easy slopes below a great cliff or mountain many of us cannot help but turn again and again to review its structures even when we know these structures like the backs of our hands. Or we trace the line we have just climbed upwards and upwards, over and over again, trying to grasp that line in its integrity and to establish its relationship to the cliff. Some of us find it impossible to make an uninterrupted descent however much the circumstances might advise this. We could look for ever and we make a fine art of walking backwards.

4.

If we turn our attention to the climb now, rather than to the cliff, we see that it cannot be considered apart from its setting and that it can sometimes hardly be separated from its story. The world's most classic and celebrated routes—say, the Grandes Jorasses by the Walker Spur, or the Nose of El Capitan—are pre-eminent because in addition to the technical merit of their climbing problems they are enlarged by their dramatic histories and, above all, they are superbly placed.

Look at the excellences of climbs such as these for a moment. We can conveniently use the first-named as our subject taking advantage of some remarks made recently by the man who first climbed it, Riccardo Cassin. The Walker is regarded as an incomparable route, Cassin rightly says, "for its continuous difficulties and for the grandeur of its development, as well as for its setting."

"The grandeur of its development." The expression stops us dead. Then we speculate on whatever nuances may have been gained or lost in translation. But next we wonder to what province of human activity an allusion is being made. Surely an aesthetic or intellectual metaphor is hidden here? The remark suggests an elevation of design and experience to disallow its use to describe a mere game. Does the idea come from music or drama? Is it as though there are identical processes involved when, say, a great symphony or tragedy involves and possesses the listener; and when the climber follows his route or, relativistically, the wall's huge structures unfold around him? (Each part distinct in character and fixed in sequence; the serial nature of the whole, once established, as irreversible as that of any familiar piece of music; themes hinted at, then taken up and developed: the diedre of 30 metres, the traverse of the ice bands, the diedre of 75 metres, the pendule, the Black Slabs, the Grey Tower, the Red Tower.)

Or does it come from the epic novel? "The grandeur of its development." A surprising thought, might we share it with an epochal game of chess or even with a superb mathematical proof? As though, going step by step beyond what had previously been imagined, there has been an extension of possibility to expand she consciousness once and for all time.

The Eperon Walker is one of the greatest climbs. But the very shortest routes on outcrops are tested to exactly similar specifications. At one time an absurd dialogue between British hillwalkers and rock climbers persisted and echoes of the argument are heard to the present day. It was alleged that the really fanatical climbers—"rock

gymnasts"—were utterly indifferent to the beauty of mountains. Whilst in fact no climb, however short, is agreed to have value and importance unless it satisfies certain uncodified but stringent aesthetic criteria—it must be difficult, it must be separate, it must be unique, it must not change, it must not incorporate the irrelevant.

Difficulty, because the experience should not be cheaply available. Separation, because the experience should be inescapable. Individuality, because the experience should be distinguishable. Permanence, because the experience should remain on offer to others. Unity, because the experience should not be subject to interruption by other experiences.

In summing up these remarks on the attributes of good climbs it seems to me to be incontrovertible that climbs offer rewards very like those of works of art. The great routes expand the consciousness, each one enlarges us. They live on in our minds for the rest of our lives. The very memory of these adventures can evoke powerful feelings. Our imaginations can recreate and perhaps surpass these experiences but first our senses must acquaint themselves with them. Only those who believe that true art is always moral or didactic will be able to reject this view on principle.

But if the climb is like a work of art, is the climber, then, a sort of artist? Yes, I say: though more often in an interpretive than in a constructive sense. In climbing, as claimed already, the two roles almost merge. But in either of these senses, why not? In movement, as though in dance? Certainly. I can imagine the brief orgy of tomfoolery and amusement the suggestion will inspire amongst some of my friends. It pleases me to entertain them for a moment. But no-one who has seen something of the range of style and attack displayed by those who lead the hardest rock-climbs could doubt for a minute that these experts exist on just the same plane as the greatest performers in the world of dance. Pavlova or Nureyev would stand anonymous amongst this company. In dramatic confrontation as though in the writing or staging of theatre? But of course. What else is climbing about? In a reach of the imagination like that of the novelist? No doubt. Every new route makes real an unexplored possibility and the epochal routes are made by those who have seen that a generally accepted or even unnoticed boundary can be crossed.

Perhaps this excursus on the nature of climbing has now become tedious and circular but certainly all sorts of speculations continue to suggest themselves. I have compared the art of climbing with that of dance. Yeats asks himself, in a famous poem, how can

we know the dancer from the dance? When the room is cleared, however, all that remains is the idea of dance. To separate the climb, the climbing and the climber may be more rewarding. For the climb has a physical existence independent of climbing and the climber; and it is capable of almost infinitely extendable description, both objectively and in terms of value, utterly different in degree to any description of golf course or dart board, also existing independently of the player. I am sure that an analysis of both recreational and artistic activities along these lines would raise some interesting questions. But whatever their place in human activity, climbs and climbing exist uniquely and whether they are best thought of as a kind of art-f rm or as a pastime almost dominated by its aesthetic components, they remain irreducibly fascinating and rich.

5.

In reviewing various aspects of the relationship between mountains and aesthetics I want to make note now of a further area for investigation. This is to consider the place of cliffs, mountain summits and climbing as images and imagery; and ultimately their relationship with the imagination. A glance at the most obvious references in any dictionary of quotations will show not only how natural their use as simile and metaphor is—the mountain as difficulty or aim, climbing as striving or risking—but also how widespread a range of use they have, stretching from subtle affective suggestion to powerful latent symbolism. Some writers have pressed these possibilities a long way to suggest the strangest and the most profound meanings. And to show the astonishing fertility of the mountain as metaphor we might look now at a single example in some detail.

One of the most well-known uses of mountain imagery in the whole of English literature is perhaps that in Hopkins' Poem 65 —the poem introducing "the desolation sonnets". The passage can stand repeating.

> Oh the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
> Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
> May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
> Durance deal with that steep or deep.

Hopkins' crabbed and idiosyncratic style, which reads rather oddly on first acquaintance, does nothing to mask the impact of his idea which is inexhaustibly suggestive. In grappling with this passage the principal commentator on Hopkins, Professor W. H. Gardner, directed his attention first to the natural association

of height and danger expressed by climbing. "The spiritual counterpart of such a precarious occupation is easily imagined," he continues: "it is the tension between the upward pull of high principles and aims and the downward pull of physical and moral weakness." Gardner reports that Hopkins' precipice is of a supernatural order; and wanting for purposes of his own to establish a debt to *King Lear* he claims that the passage has, as "underthought", Shakespeare's stupendous but imaginary cliff on which, Edgar deludes the blinded Gloucester, "halfway down, hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade." Gardner is encouraged here by Keats' appropriation of these last words to describe his own occupation. But Keats does not misuse Shakespeare's lines in any way. The letter in which this fancy appears makes clear that he is using the image simply as a metaphor of challenge and struggle—"I must think that difficulties nerve the Spirit of a Man. . . . . the Cliff of Poesy Towers above me." Gardner, however, devises an analogy which seems to refer to Shakespeare's sea-cliff rather than to Hopkins' ambiguous precipice, an analogy which may possibly rest on observations of primitive sea-cliff culling protection techniques but which more likely depends upon an abysmal ignorance of the uses of ropes. But, either way, the analogy is interesting since it allows Gardner to speak of a lifeline to God on this metaphysical precipice and to imagine "a daring climber who, his lifeline broken, is left clinging to the sheer cliff-face with no help from above and certain destruction below."

(By now some readers may have dismissed the ideas of the great critic as fanciful; whilst others may be impatient at this lightning tour of Eng. Lit. and may think it an irritating digression. If they would prefer a broader question for a moment or two they might divert themselves with this speculation: how, in spite of language, culture and topography, did the metaphor of the Fall of Man gain so easy and so widespread an acceptance?)

But most importantly it has to be said that Gardner understands the gulf purely as something inimical and appalling. He relates it to the Jesuitical concept of desolation—"separation from God, the difficulty of maintaining the religious life." Yet for the climber the image of Hopkins' poem holds no horror and indeed it powerfully evokes the ecstatic wonder and glory of the mountain scene. In fact it has such force and presence that it sidetracks the reader from the direction of Hopkins' thought. The rightness of the image endures but the strength of it nearly breaks the poem and turns the metaphor inside out.

One might continue by searching out other references to these same lines as in the title of one of Elizabeth Jennings' books, *The Mind has Mountains*, where in fact the appropriation is legitimate since the theme is nervous breakdown. Or one might look for other faces of the same idea, such as the claim of another modern poet, Gary Snyder: "Outwardly, the equivalent of the unconscious is the wilderness."

We have been looking at an example of mountain imagery around which an essay might be constructed; but in less extreme shapes this imagery occurs often enough in ordinary speech as the most obvious of sense-metaphors. Or it is found with predictable regularity in the hit parade where it is frequently pure cliché: I'll climb any mountain for you. Yet even here a painstaking survey will reveal a surprisingly wide range of ideas. From popular music at the time of writing one would have to draw particular attention to some curious and intriguing references in the songs of Melanie Safka.

Finally, we might consider visual images briefly. For the individual climber images of climbing and mountains do not always seem to fit easily into any of Read's classes of the image—after-images and memory, dream, hallucinatory and eidetic images. Apart from particularised and generalised memory images the last-named is certainly the closest whilst still described rather unsatisfactorily for this purpose. (At the first period of maximum intensity in the career of many climbers, climbing and falling dreams or nightmares are experienced; analysts interested in the interpretation of dreams have produced fascinating explanations of dreams of falling which are universally noticed; they can now ask themselves this perplexing question—what is the hidden significance of a climber's dream of falling off?) Perhaps it would be simplest to add a class of directed and spontaneous fantasy images. It is not possible to guess how much men differ in these matters. For myself, I am quite uncertain whether the most important images of climbing have come from the memory of climbs accomplished or from the imagining of projected climbs or from the fantasising of imaginary climbs.

6.

The mountain as metaphor, image or symbol is a single aspect, or a single group of related aspects, of mountain aesthetics; but it is such a limitlessly rich field that it can only lead us away from the present purpose. Before attempting a wider view of the attraction the mountain scene has held for men, we ought to return

this discussion to its point of origin for a moment by reminding ourselves that the discoveries of the senses are the basis of knowledge and that perception itself has a pronounced aesthetic character in the young. However, it appears that this character weakens for nearly all individuals as their familiarity with and their structuring of the external world progresses. Such a poem as Wordsworth's Immortality Ode is a typical response to the baffled sense of loss that afflicts most of us from time to time and artists have probably tried to deal with this deprivation since the dawn of speech. But today we also find psychologists, even psychiatrists, attending to these matters and suggesting that it may be possible to some extent to recover this gift of unsoiled perception, relating it especially to the enjoyment of nature and art indifferently. Amongst these Eric Berne—whose definition of *awareness* might have been used as one of the locating points of this essay—wrote sensitively on the poignancy of our experience of the natural world; and his remarks include the suggestion that the boundaries of eidetic perception may well include the field of kinaesthesia.

To suggest how strong an aesthetic content may be present in simple direct experience I find myself obliged to refer to a rather unlikely source: the second part of Hemingway's short story, *Big Two-Hearted River*, provides, despite the screen imposed by the characteristically staccato monotone, a short but fine illustration of how delicious nature's impact upon every mode of sense-perception can be—and this in a context not unlike that of outdoor education in Britain.

It is perhaps worth drawing attention now to a possible distinction between the mental and physical pre-conditions to the aesthetic experiences excited by art and by nature. It may be that in the enjoyment of nature a broader tolerance is permitted. It is true that in some morbid states of body or mind an affinity, even a need, for certain types of music or poetry has often been recognised. But if we are to be moved by a book or symphony or film, or even by some more orgiastic type of aesthetic experience such as may be found with some kinds of dance or music, it is normally essential that we approach the experience without being in any marked physical distress or mental harassment. This is not necessarily the case in the adventure sports.

To put this distinction more concretely. Bishop Blougram asserted that our freest and most receptive moments are those of repletion when hunger and thirst have been satisfied: "when dinner's done,/And body gets its sop and holds its noise/And leaves soul free a little." The climber knows better; that nobody can guess when these moments will arrive; that physical well-being

is not at all important and that exhaustion itself can open the senses. We sit at the summit and the dazed organism is glad to have a few minutes to collect its wits and energy. It waits quietly and in this stillness the consciousness grasps impressions with an unusual immediacy and directness. We feel a sort of absence of mediation and an extraordinary sense of unity with our surroundings as if for an instant the self is almost obliterated. But that is only one situation. Hunger, anxiety, the erosion of responses through age and familiarity—however worn we are, all of these impediments can suddenly be swept away. An extraordinary cloud effect, an unexpected view, a glimpse down some astounding aspect of a cliff—and a mad, wriggling, irresistible little impulse of pleasure surprises us and transfigures us for a moment. Mountaineering is *the* psychedelic experience. We come down out of the cloud to see half-revealed landforms; we pass in a few confusing seconds from a state of utter disorientation to a full grasp of our position. This moment is as close to Relevation as most of us can get. It is as though we were able to empty the mind and enjoy briefly an analogy of the irreversible transition from innocence to experience.

(It is possible, now, that some reader will say that the state of mind aroused by what I call an aesthetic experience is a state of mind he would describe as a religious or mystical experience. I would rather not argue about that. And certainly it is true that there is nothing amongst the four qualities settled on by William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* as characterising mystical states—that is, their ineffability, their noetic quality, their transiency, and their passivity—that there is nothing amongst these qualities to exclude the moments of illumination some mountain travellers have tried to describe. But why should there be? James himself points out that a remarkable proportion of the cases he studied were related as set in the out-of-doors).

7.

A point has been reached at which it might be possible to attempt a broader view of men's feelings about mountains. We might begin with the observation that in recent years it has been suggested more and more frequently that there is a serious crisis in the transmission of traditional cultural values. It is said that receptivity to the greatest literature, art and music is diminishing because pressures too obvious to need naming are obstructing the communication of these values to the young. Certainly that culture was never freely available anyway, or universally appreciated where it was available. But at the same time the traditional folk cultures have also collapsed or are collapsing before the same

pressures; and of the forms that attempt to imitate or replace them only fragments seem likely to endure or to lay claim to a similar importance.

The one aesthetic experience significant to all men through all time is that of our affair with landscape. It does not depend upon intelligence or literacy and it needs no agent to help in its interpretation. But teachers could far more easily defend and sustain their role in arranging a taste of this experience in the wildest country if they had a wider grasp of its importance and of its manifold aspects and values.

It might be objected immediately that what I call our affair with landscape is really our affair with place: that it is no pure aesthetic experience, if any such thing exists, but simply a matter of nostalgia. And some will say that great cities can be experienced as beautiful, even in their most derelict quarters, making a mockery of the ambitions of city planners and of the theories of aestheticians alike. This we agree. But I wonder whether those moments—when, perhaps, a sunset lurid with presentiment silhouettes the gasworks; or when the lights of an enormous conurbation are seen spread in some midnight panorama—I wonder whether those moments are simply those when the city copies Nature: when it is nearly silent; when it is nearly deserted; when those million pinpricks of light seem as separate as the stars. Abandoned docks and wharves only attempt that queer sense of the presences of water felt in any quiet creek or inlet; narrow streets between empty warehouses have the still, claustrophobic atmosphere of canyons or ravines. So that the feelings aroused in these situations really only testify, firstly, to that subjectivity of aesthetic experience already mentioned; and secondly, to the potency of Nature's archetypal forms and states.

We need, then, a comprehensive view of landscape's types of action upon man or, more properly, of his responses to landscape. These responses might be examined from a number of points of view but for a brief indication of their range the most obvious approach is to use degree of familiarity and to restrict oneself to the extremes of known and unknown. This seems to utilise a division in history extending from farmers and hunters to centrists wishing to fill in the small detail and travellers always thirsting to visit new areas. For, in thinking about responses to landscape we should surely consider not only contemporary material, obvious everywhere, but also the fields in which important historical evidence is embedded—principally literature, art and myth.

Using literature, the most accessible of these fields and the one requiring least background explanation, some general remarks and three or four points of reference to suggest the range of any such enquiry might be of interest. First, though, there seems to be a bias in the evidence we have. It is often assumed that wild and mountainous country was almost universally regarded with fear and distaste until the Romantics contributed admiration, a taste for the sublime, so paving the way for the tourist; that the simple people who actually spent their lives amongst the hills, never venturing further than was necessary, shared the same attitude. These assumptions are dubious and may be wildly incorrect. Perhaps they stem mainly from the fact that most of our evidence comes from literate people and literacy in the past was usually acquired in cities. So that the cultivated men who made brief journeys through mountainous areas left a more comprehensive record than those others : and this record expressed mainly the astonishment and uncertainty of the stranger.

8.

This aspect of the literature of mountains is too well-known to need review. But it may be worth remarking that wild country has been seen as beautiful, alluring or fascinating long before the time of the Romantics. In fact, feelings about the mountains in this sense have something in common with feelings about the sea in times when voyages were less certain ventures; and at the very dawn of English literature one of the first Anglo-Saxon poems, *The Seafarer*, centres on an ambivalent attitude to discomfort and hazard which is immediately understood by anyone who has travelled widely in the mountains and felt himself from time to time at risk.

There seems to be a sort of prehistoric residuum in our feelings about uninhabited country. Without too great a strain our imaginations will let us see a particular landscape as the first men may have seen it : its queer focussing points—the uniqueness of a rock pinnacle, a cave in an escarpment, a characteristic ridge that once seen is never forgotten, the peculiar orientation of the river, the mysterious edge of the forest. We can understand its possibilities in shelter, food fuel and menace. We can estimate its scale and obstructions in energy, hours or days. But even to those aspects which seem potentially the most alarming we find confused responses. The "forest fears" we still recognise had their most overt expression at the end of the Middle Ages and are actualised in the paintings of Altdorfer and Grunewald : yet even there the forest is not only filled with witches—it is bewitching and it draws us in. The cave may be

occupied by something: but we want it for ourselves and when we enter it every stain on the walls seems a remembered part of our upbringing.

In the literature of mountains as seen or imagined by strangers it is even possible to detect a curious element of anticipation or prophecy. There is that famous and arresting fragment from Blake:

> Great things are done when men and mountains meet;
> These are not done by jostling in the street.

Blake's one and only excursion from London was to Felpham, near Bognor. Mountaineering as a pastime did not begin until fifty years after he wrote this couplet. What did he mean? How did he know? We can see why he is called a visionary.

9.

The other aspect of our response to mountain scenery, the mountain as home, is less well-documented. A reason for this has been suggested but it is surprising how little discussion has centred upon the subject of the effects upon personality of a long familiarity with mountain country. We are ready to say that clothes make the man when they only clothe him: it could be said more truly that landscape makes him. We talk about the characteristics of people from particular regions but we know nothing of the effects upon temperament of different types of natural environment. These effects are masked by more obvious cultural features but there may well be subtle characteristics imprinted by a lifetime spent in forests, deserts or mountains just as specific as the effects of certain environments upon speech and physique.

Whilst, however, the early literature of mountains as home is a comparatively slight one, we can catch glimpses which suggest that feelings of nostalgia, affection or love have been entertained for the hills as long as men have lived near them. When city-dwellers ask how anyone can bear to spend his life in such a wild place we think of T'ao Hung-ching, a court adviser in ancient China, who went back to the mountains on retirement; when the Emperor begged him to return and asked him what he had up there anyway, he replied succinctly:

> Among the hills, what have I?
> Along the ridges, white clouds lie,
> Drifting purely for my felicity
> —No man can trap them for your Majesty.

When people ask whether the game is worth the risk we think of an incident in *Njal's Saga* after Gunnar is outlawed. With a choice of exile or death he sets off to leave Iceland; but he has hardly reached the Markar River when his horse stumbles, he has to jump from the saddle, and he finds himself looking back up at Hlidarend. "How lovely the slopes are," Gunnar says, "more lovely than they have ever seemed to me before. . . . I am going back home and I will not go away." With these words he commits himself to his fate.

When people say that we can get accustomed to living anywhere we remember Cyaxeres' daughter, for whom the Hanging Gardens of Babylon were built. What is important is not the possibility that the legend may very well be true. It is the fact that, true or not, even in antiquity it must have been taken as credible that a girl from the hill country of the Medes might find the flood-plain of the Euphrates depressing beyond endurance; and that a king might have built a mountain to console her, bringing rock colossal distances at enormous cost in life and wealth, raising cliffs, engineering streams and cascades, constructing arbours of shrubs and flowers to make her new home bearable for his bride.

I have been talking about evidence from ancient times. But these feelings translate directly into those of our contemporaries. Born in the Victorian era, writing at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, Lascelles Abercrombie expresses just the same longing—

> Would now the tall swift mists could lay
> Their wet grasp on my hair,
> And the great natures of the hills
> Round me friendly were.

How do you like my team, reader? A dropout from the Imperial Court of the Ch'i dynasty; an Icelandic farmer who may well have been a real person who fell out with his neighbours about 989AD; a Median princess of two and a half thousand years ago, disenchanted with her perquisites as Queen of Babylon; a Georgian journalist, turned Inspector of Munitions, turned Professor of Poetry—who all said that the beauty of mountains was of great importance to them, that in some way or other it sustained them and that without the daily evidence of that beauty the quality of life was hopelessly impaired.

10.

Of course, even to consider landscape with the aid of this crude division between known and unknown tends actually to obscure the subtlety, range and complexity of our feelings about it.

There is the Hopkins of "Binsey Poplars" as well as the Hopkins of "Inversnaid" in most of us perhaps. I am sure, however, that there is a pressing need to examine our relationship with landscape purely for the purposes of outdoor education. This enquiry will meet some colossal problems. We agree, I will assume now, that our responses to art and nature are closely similar, that they are describable in more or less the same sorts of terms and that there are few other areas of experience that share just the same group of responses. What is there, though, in the enjoyment of nature to correspond with those concepts of relative value established in the arts?

One feels obliged to suggest here that surely any landscape with variety and complexity must necessarily enrich its inhabitants in ways that monocultural plains cannot. But the nature of this enrichment is elusive. What passes in the minds of those men who live out their lives in small European or American communities growing crops on a dead-flat plain from horizon to horizon? Or in those African mining settlements of barrack-like hutments with no tree or blade of grass in sight? Do we have a bank of feeling to be applied to any phenomena, to social relations or to the natural world indiscriminately? It may be that this is so but I cannot dismiss the thought that men who labour their lives away in these situations are doubly oppressed; having missed out on a fair share of the wealth of Nature as well as of the riches of Man.

What can the child who grows up in these surroundings find to hang his feelings on? The sun, the sea of grain, or subtle changes in the sky? Surely not. Feelings can only be invested easily in tangible, individual details. For younger children the genius loci can inhabit some very small feature, an overgrown ditch, an old tree stump, a tiny corner of waste land. As the child grows his sense of community with nature can be sustained if just a few more random elements exist. The enclosure of fields by hedges and the presence of an occasional group of trees or patch of woodland is an extremely valuable amenity.

But the adolescent's developing energies, on the other hand, suddenly require a very much wider freedom and from this time onward how fortunate are those born into three-dimensional landscapes. Youngsters taken into the hills for the first time are astonished at the simplest things. Characteristically, they are often amazed and delighted at the sight of moving cloud-shadows, something not to be encountered in restricted urban environments or in open but flat countrysides. Hills excite again and again that sense of wonder which, Cottrell rightly says, requires the dual elements of surprise and of the ability to enrich the imagination.

From the assertion that mountain scenery is superior to that of forests, plains or coastlines and that the hills lay a special claim some provocative and fascinating questions follow immediately. These seem to me to be difficult enough to form the matter for a book. At a simpler level, however, I am sure that any attempt to describe men's relationships with mountains ought to look for the very widest boundaries in time and place. This is in itself a grand enough enterprise. "Mountains are the beginning and the end of all natural scenery," Ruskin said.

PARASOCIAL INSIGHTS

1.

Apart from its beauty Nature offers other incalculably important gifts : the most outstanding of these is, or is derived from, that sense of freedom usually felt in wild country. I have mentioned social values briefly already, values accepted as contributing to the coherence, stability and efficiency of society in its present state, and I shall say more about these later. Now I want to draw attention to those insights Nature fosters which I will call parasocial. Ought I to apologise for this invention? I do not mean asocial or anti-social or unsocial or nonsocial; neither do I mean individual, except as a generalised and universal possibility. So perhaps this heading will serve for a moment to emphasise those viewpoints taking the human being rather than society as the starting point. I group here, then, conveniently under one heading, critical impulses (stemming from the individual's sense of conflict with society and provoking in him the idea that the structure of society might be improved) and philosophical considerations (stemming from the individual's sense of conflict with Nature and producing a response to his reading of the human condition).

This sense of freedom is treated, then, on the one hand as allowing us a sanctuary or a neutral country from which we can look back at the state and society more objectively because without duress; and on the other as enabling us to inspect in this isolation aspects of ourselves beyond our physical, intellectual, social and even aesthetic needs—to discover fields of emotion, personality and attitude falling entirely outside those appetites.

First, though, a short excursus in defence of privacy because nowadays this freedom is threatened even in the hills. The first intrusion, the aircraft, was annoying but it was unlikely to disturb for more than a moment or two. Transistor radios and walkie-talkie sets are not used by those who realise what wild country is worth : the people who carry them can be a nuisance but a number of ways of dealing with this will occur to the climber who finds their presence offensive. Artificial satellites are another matter changing the possibilities of the night sky as it has been known for millenia over whole continents. But, equally seriously, an inquisitive helicopter has a very damaging effect upon a privacy which used to be protected by a measurable isolation in time and space. This privacy is being assailed on all sides in Britain's hills today and it seems likely that a bitter confrontation is becoming inevitable. Big cities need accessible sanctuaries and since it is no longer possible

to retreat any further it is clear that what remains will have to be defended much more aggressively. So perhaps we shall meet the Urban Guerilla up in the hills shortly. After all, our hills are being urbanised; and hills were always the proper place for guerillas.

2.

In talking about the individual's reflections upon society I want first to mention some remarks attributed to an eminent Norwegian mountaineer who has described the participants in the most extreme climbing of today—the multi-day routes on the big walls, from Romsdal in Norway to Yosemite in California—as a part of the Underground. This sort of climbing is, he has suggested, "protest in terms of physical effort." As if, nowadays, when we lift up our eyes unto the hills the strength that comes is that of desperation.

It is not possible to comment fairly on these observations since the argument is not available in English at the time of writing. The first thought to strike the reader will probably be that this must be the most unlikely and abortive form of protest ever registered. On reflection, though, there may be a grain of truth in the suggestion. To put one's life at risk over and over again for no material reward, to burn up all that energy on the indifferent mountain, does suggest that society's purposes and possibilities have been scrutinised : that a tendency for goals to be baulked and for energy to be obstructed has been recognised; and that a more adequate yardstick for our restless physical and mental energies has been agreed upon. In this sense it might be held that the most difficult climbing has as one of its motors a dissatisfaction with the outlets modern society offers.

3.

A tradition of a retreat to the hills or deserts by thinkers in perplexity goes back as far as we have record. But these thinkers, whether they withdrew for a few hours or opted out for years or for a lifetime, have seldom been reluctant to tell any of society's representatives who were ready to listen, what they lacked in their lives. The early history of world religion and philosophy is in large part the story of those men.

Even in the period since the Industrial Revolution those writers who have set the highest values upon Nature as a theatre for contemplation have usually felt qualified to advise us on how we might improve ourselves; but, more interestingly, they have often felt a need to take action, whether constructive or destructive, to change our condition. Numerous examples spring to mind. Richard

Jefferies, for instance, is best known for his mystical rhapsodies on Nature and the soul and these have a rather obscure relationship with the real world. But he also produced work which, considered as early rural sociology, is quite outstanding. And his political pamphleteering together with both aspects of his remarkable volte-face in relation to the affairs of Wiltshire farm labourers represents an activism which would never be guessed at from a reading of *Bevis* or *The Story of My Heart*.

Thoreau probably carried out the most striking and convincing demonstration of a possible independence of the state and of a rigorously limited dependence upon society: a determination to treat institutions on his own terms. But during the period of that experiment his regard for his political and moral responsibilities removed him for a single celebrated night from the shores of Walden Pond into the town jail of Concord. Though to outward appearances his message was not heard he speaks to us now with a voice which though distant is remarkably clear and which, a century after his death, has suddenly won an attentive audience. And recent editions of *Walden*, his meditation upon Nature, have contained as a supplement his essay *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, his confrontation with the state.

Then there is Kropotkin. No doubt he gathered, during the fifty thousand miles of travel that enabled him to establish the true orography of Central Asia, some of the material for *Mutual Aid* and perhaps the germ of such slighter pedagogical contributions as *What Geography Ought To Be*. But although there is little direct evidence on the point it is hard to disabuse oneself of the impression that it was during those journeys, by those Amur River campsites of which he speaks so nostalgically, that he began to clarify the views on the individual and society which were to prove so disconcerting to the Tzar and to Lenin alike.

These are random illustrations of a type of life and personality and many more might be offered. Surely, though, it is the contrast between the sense of independence Nature allows the traveller and the show of subjection society puts before him that helped to fire and shape the concept of social justice felt by men like these. We meet poor people everywhere, in the country in the same proportion as in the city. But if we talk to them we find striking distinctions. Vagrants in the country often keep a sense of freedom, originality, even a degree of humour: the subsistence workers and the night people in big cities are characterised by their terrible and appalling lack of dignity—they are utterly crushed by circumstance. One does not have to spend years in the wilderness to notice this. After a

trip to the hills, pay a late-night visit to a large cheap cafe in a big city. Look at the counter assistants, the tea-drinkers who have nowhere else to go, the down-and-out sheltering in the doorway. Then you know that huge cities are maneaters.

Outdoor recreation, in both its most active and most passive styles, has sometimes been called a form of escapism. Certainly the wild places have always offered, for some temperaments, an inviolable refuge from care. "Happy is the land, my young friend, where one need not seek peace in the wilderness," exclaimed Rousseau; "but where is that country?" he added, a surprising question to issue from the pastoral Europe of more than two hundred years ago. We ought at any rate to affirm that if we are making an escape it is an escape that releases us into a world that is super real. It may be worth remembering that in order to demonstrate the reality of existence Dr. Johnson, lost for words for the first and last time in his life, could think of no better way to disprove the theories of Bishop Berkeley than to kick a rock. Rock, every climber knows, is one of the reallest of all materials. It is also one of the most enduring. Else why but to emphasise the impermanent beauty of his model did Leonardo paint the Mona Lisa against a curtain of rocks?

But those who say that outdoor recreation is escapist also show a lack of awareness of psychological types. Some people can get away from it all, some few of them perhaps without even the assistance of isolation : others carry their preoccupations with them but their moods may colour their surroundings to suit themselves and this ambience will allow them to examine these preoccupations with the objectivity of distance. Which are the fortunate ones, which draw greater benefit, which have most to offer society in the short run and in the long run, will probably remain for ever open questions.

4.

Here is a model. A group of experienced walkers sets off to climb an easy mountain. The weather changes, becomes mildly unpleasant, and visibility is restricted by snow or cloud to a few feet. The party splits, some deciding to go on to the summit, others preferring to take a low-level route below the cloud-base. We ask our panel of psychologists now : why did the party divide the way it did? After heated discussion the tentative answer comes : the ones who went to the top were the strong ones? Nonsense. Every possible physical division would have recombined the parties quite differently. Try again. The ones who were most strongly motivated to succeed? Wrong again—I forgot to say that the summit held no

prestige; the whole party had been there on numerous occasions. This illustration might be developed for a number of purposes but my question is: what was the summit party about as it trudged upwards?—poor visibility and visual stimulus, little difficulty and physical or mental stimulus. The interesting point is that one knew beforehand which group each individual would join and it did not appear to be a case of extraverts and introverts finding their slots.

I have to admit that I have no idea what the members of the summit party were about. They were engaged in constructive thinking or in pleasurable recollection or in the shaping of fantasies. But certainly they chose these conditions to some purpose—a prolonged minimisation of external stimuli, a contraction within wet waterproofs, a slow and steady pace.

Now these possibilities are not continuously available in outdoor activities. Yet even in the rock-climber's day, whilst he cannot engage so fully in these luxuries when climbing, a space will be found for some such private mental activity. And it remains true that when we are least encumbered by material things we can best assess the order of our dependence upon them: when we are least under pressure we can best decide whether the pressures to which we are ordinarily subject are inevitable and worth suffering.

In these ways then, Nature gives each of us an opportunity to construct his own critique of society: and there is some evidence to suggest that such a critique is as likely to lead to forms of activism as to a taste for disengagement.

5.

The other aspect of the freedom Nature offers is entirely individual. It is the chance to discover in moments of space and silence with all the variables removed—or, for that matter, in circumstances like that described above—whether we have any non-social thoughts and feelings left, other than those supplied by the mass media or by our peer groups.

An extraordinary observation of St. Augustine's has come down to us: "Men travel far to climb high mountains; to observe the majesty of the ocean; to trace the sources of rivers; but they neglect themselves". The force of this remark strikes us immediately; but it has to be said that men engaged in these enterprises are surely better able to attend to themselves in the sense Augustine hoped than are men imprisoned in cities. The most profound and sobering realisations that can come to us are those concerned with time and change; and people living in huge conurbations are to a

large extent shielded from the natural manifestations of these processes. An old building is demolished or a grass verge disappears but the lesson is only given once. The modern city is less and less frequently paralysed by snow or divided by floods; it has fewer and fewer trees to tell us about spring and autumn; its flowers are composed into a civic coat-of-arms and they lose their proper significance. In the country men have the unmasked onset and progress of the seasons forced upon their notice. They are obliged to associate changes in themselves and in their fortunes with comparisons between this winter and the last, relating the spans of their lives directly into this cycle. Time is memory. ("How can one bear to hear beyond the woods the cuckoo's cry?" asks the Chinese woman poet Li Ch'ing-chao, writing whilst the Normans were establishing themselves in England. Spare a thought for her for a minute.) This grasp of process and impermanence with a continuity that excludes the individual is a poignant or a tragic sense perhaps but it is the touchstone of humanistic values. It is perhaps the vital centre of the matters outdoor education is about. But this requires more inspired and extensive treatment and a more able writer.

6.

The contents of this chapter were optimistically summarised by the heading Insights. In honesty and for completeness it now has to be admitted that in our relation with Nature we sometimes sense a wall no insight can penetrate. But it seems to me that rather than marking the point of failure this moment in the transaction is supremely valuable and important. I experience a presence at once absolutely strange and utterly familiar. It teaches me my place. Nature, sometimes loudly and insistently, sometimes faintly but unmistakably, makes a proclamation I simply cannot understand; neither could the first men; neither will any of my inheritors.

To express this experience as memorably as possible I have to use someone else's words and I take the most striking attempt I have come across. This passage, from a letter of William James, has already been remarked on by P. W. Martin and following him by Wilfred Noyce. James is describing a sleepless night spent wandering alone on a mountain, not long before delivering the lectures which were to become famous as *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. (But surely such puzzling intimations as these are as easily received by the least introspective youngster as by the

profoundest philosopher.) Here, then, are William James' brief notes on his haunted night on the slopes of Mt. Marcy.

> I spent a good deal of it in the woods, where the streaming moonlight lit up things in a magical checkered play, and it seemed as if the Gods of all the nature-mythologies were holding an indescribable meeting in my breast with the moral Gods of the inner life . . . . . The intense significance of some sort, of the whole scene, if one could only *tell* the significance; the intense inhuman remoteness of its inner life, and yet the intense *appeal* of it; it severlasting freshness and its immemorial antiquity and decay; . . . . . In point of fact, I can't find a single word for all that significance and don't know what it was significant of, so there it remains, a mere boulder of *impression*.

OTHER EXPERIENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.

Most of the values associated with outdoor recreation have a complicated interrelationship. In order to bring out the particular importance of each one it seems necessary to name them in isolation—without, however, discussing each at length since this would lead to a fair amount of repetition. It is interesting now, I think, to mention briefly two fresh matters: first, travel regarded as general experience; and second, excitement regarded as a psychophysical need.

"The Naked Ape," its discoverer says, "is an Exploring Ape." If we look at the whole field of human movement—exploration, journeys, travel—whether forced by circumstance or made by choice we have to agree that its history is the history of man. The migrations of whole peoples in prehistoric times to secure a less hostile environment or to reduce an imbalance of pressure created by other peoples; the emigration or displacement of cultural groups through recorded history for political, religious or economic reasons; the conscious search for new experience characteristic of Western civilisation—journeys made in hope of the discovery of wealth, journeys to examine other cultures to satisfy curiosity or to broaden the mind, journeys for no other desire than to fill in a blank on the map: when we think of this panorama we see that not only has travel nearly always been a vivifying experience, rewarding usually for the groups that sponsored it or for the individuals who travelled but also that the impact of this experience often seems to be of a kind and apparently satisfies a natural need in some men.

However, the most significant aspect of travel for the purpose of this essay is its progressive and regrettable devaluation as experience in recent times. I have to point out immediately that in general terms Daniel Boorstin has dealt with this subject admirably in the chapter called "The Lost Art of Travel" in *The Image*. He contrasts very pointedly the difficulties of early travellers and the consequent richness of their experience ("Cabral's company, which went from Portugal to India in 1500. . . . . spent over six months at sea. They could not help knowing they had really gone somewhere.") with the ease and insulation of modern travel, whether by superhighway and standardised motel, by jet, or by package tour. He defines the transition neatly: "When the traveller's risks have become insurable he has become a tourist." Much of what Boorstin has to say has the closest relevance to outdoor education. He fits

into a wide frame what we know from our limited experience : that as the difficulties of language, degree of risk and problems of movement are reduced, so also are the rewards of travel.

However, in discussing the decline of travel as a life-enhancing experience it should be pointed out that the situation of early travellers was very different from ours. In fact, they had their own dream of comfortable, safe, supersonic travel and to satisfy that desire they came up with the Magic Carpet, the Roc and similar means of transport to search out the wonders of the world. But the tempo of their lives was not so oppressive as that of ours. They needed no period of quarantine before feeling free.

Different for us. Supersonic travel is hopeless because a man reaches his destination with all his anxieties intact. The speed of flight is also the speed of pursuit and no-one can outdistance telephone and radio. Time is needed to recompose our rhythms and journeys are therefore improved in proportion to the length of time spent in getting to the area of our major interest. Generally speaking, the longer or the more difficult the journey the better, as a succession of new impressions obliterates our habitual routines and persisting worries.

In themselves, though, difficulty, distance and expenditure of time guarantee nothing. To obtain the Duke of Edinburgh Award at Gold Level the young candidate must carry out a four-day journey through wild country; this is cheaply and easily arranged. To reach the moon a four-day journey is also currently required; this amounts, by contrast, to the most expensive journey of all time and the most difficult to arrange. I have mixed feelings about the philosophies of the promoters of each of these projects. But I insist that the first of these journeys, however badly planned and incompetently executed, is educational in a sense that the second could never be. The astronauts who stepped out of Apollo 11 were in the most exact sense possible the very men who got into it. No traveller ever had a more uneducational journey nor one that used fewer faculties of body and intellect; perhaps accounting for the banality of the heroes' remarks upon arrival. For the Duke's boys on the other hand, as for the early voyagers, their journey extended them and changed them; all their experience became a part of them.

Nonetheless, we exaggerate if we say that all modern mechanised travel is worthless within the terms of this essay. For an American to drive across Europe, or for a European to cross the States for the first time, can be a wonderfully memorable enterprise even

today. In contemporary cinema we can see clearly in such pieces as *Easy Rider* and *Vanishing Point* how, in spite of the handicap of mechanically excellent vehicles, a strongly existential sense of landscape and travel can at times come through—sustained purely by the extended nature of the journey and by some quality of hostility or threat held in suspense.

2.

Might it be possible, for the purposes of outdoor education, to separate out the elements essential to a satisfying expedition? Perhaps we should find that those features we can isolate as important to a memorable overnight camping trip are also those to be seen in less vestigial form in the travels of Marco Polo or in the adventures of Huckleberry Finn. At any rate, for a brief expansion of this possibility it seems helpful to review the idea of the youth excursion under three general headings: these are, its dimensions and focal points; its plausibility as a meaningful journey; and its experiential type.

First, then, the dimensions and focal points of the expedition. Every journey has a beginning, a middle and an end. The reader may have noticed this already. The beginning and end determine the journey's extendedness and clearly a good trip is valuable in proportion to its length. Certainly there must be a point of diminishing returns in this matter of dimension. Many of the most interesting and admirable journeys in history would consume too irreplaceable a part of our precious lifetimes today—who would sail with Polo now? But this consideration does not influence the planning of expeditions for young people since there are always many factors operating to limit the duration of these journeys.

However, the staging of the focal points of the journey does deserve a mention. About the moment of departure not much can be said. Yet leavetaking, with its prospects of separation and uncertainty—"those uneasy thoughts/one has before a journey/not to come home again," says Alex Comfort—is potentially a deep experience. And perhaps someone ought to pay attention to the question of whether it might be possible in some way to exploit deliberately the resources of that moment.

About the middle or, rather, the dividing point of an overnight journey, a good deal could be said. Satisfactory journeys probably always include the recognition of a moment of arrival. In the archetypal journey we walk down from barren or snow-clad mountains into a paradisiacal valley: "Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,/Wet, below the snow line, smelling

of vegetation . . . . " But this moment of arrival may take a number of different shapes. Indeed, A. B. Afford said years ago that the characteristic form of the school expedition in Britain would be the late-night minibus journey to a roadside campsite in the hills, with the unknown backcloth only revealed at daybreak the following morning. Here there is an aesthetic impact maximised by contrast and surprise; and in some curious way this impact seems intimately dependent on its underpinning by one of the types of modern technological experience—the swift drive through the night.

After the moment of arrival comes the moment of return: the moment of survival, that is. The survivor needs to meet his friends, to boast of his exploits and experiences and to hear their own tales. We ought not to spoil this encounter in any way.

The second major aspect of the expedition is that of its plausibility as a meaningful journey. In the ideal journey no outside support or assistance is available and no easy escape from the commitment is possible. It is here that outdoor educationists working in England and Wales face severe problems. The outside world is too close and it constantly threatens the sense of necessity in the journey. Generally speaking, expeditions are of two types: we go through unknown country; or we go into it for some purpose or objective and we retreat by more or less the way we came. In North Wales, for instance, it is still possible to sustain the sense of a purposive journey of the second type. But the first type is no longer possible beyond the single night span, owing to the dissection of the area by roads. Beyond that limit the desirable "suspension of disbelief", if we may borrow the expression, becomes difficult. In addition the organiser's own anxieties also often operate against the purity of the expedition. When he devises a route for young people he wants to allow possibilities of escape; but these possibilities emphasise the contrived nature of the journey and threaten the illusion of purposeful travel. In fact a fair proportion of the journeys planned for Duke of Edinburgh Award or Mountain Leadership Certificate purposes are undermined in this way to the point of absurdity. And the only solution for English and Welsh alike is to go to Scotland or Ireland; or, far better, to enlarge the area of wild country by closing, and allowing Nature to efface, a quite small number of stretches of road—a simple, inexpensive and utterly desirable step forward.

The third aspect of the expedition is that of its experiential type. This characteristic derives from the hazard or difficulty or interest of the journey, or from any combination of these, and

it determines the degree of release or sense of achievement felt on safe return. Even the astronauts are therefore permitted a share, after all, in the rewards of expedition travel. But it ought to be noted here that all journeys can be rated on a scale stretching from those in which one has entire responsibility for one's safety to those in which one has little or no control over one's fate. In the extreme cases at one end of the scale the traveller can always make the appropriate reaction to any threat and it is arguable that this possibility of making effective responses lends these journeys not only their satisfying nature but also a potentially therapeutic element. At the other extreme—the experience of the airline passenger or the astronaut—there is usually no useful action, or at any rate no useful physical action, to be taken in case of anxiety or of real crisis; and these types of journey, unless the traveller is utterly unaware of any danger, are therefore by definition associated with stress.

Perhaps, to close these remarks on travel, I might draw attention at this point to the phenomenal enthusiasm shown by young people in Britain over the past decade for the Tolkien fantasies—and also, to a lesser extent, to the popularity of Mervyn Peake and of a host of lesser writers in the same genre. This vogue of *The Lord of the Rings* seems to unite almost every class and faction of the younger generation; and on my own mountain excursions with young people I have heard our surroundings compared on a surprising number of occasions with the lands through which the Hobbits passed. Some commentators have found Tolkien's grip on the young depressing, seeing it as evidence of a retreat from reality. But I think that there may be an encouraging side to this infatuation. To me it indicates a thirst for landscapes that cannot be degraded and an understanding of the value of travel through these landscapes—where, unlike Britain's National Parks, ruination through development, information service pressures and ease of vehicular access is unknown, and where the sense of wonder is constantly excited. I am optimistic that this taste will express itself positively in the not-too-distant future.

3.

On the second matter, excitement considered as a psychophysical need, a great deal might be written. Taking a broad view it seems to be true that all creatures above a fairly clear biological horizon cannot work at optimum efficiency without this stimulus at fairly regular intervals. We hear of a European zoo which tried to stock and breed a rare species of antelope for years without success. By

chance one day a young leopard was walked past the cage. The animals had never seen one before and the leopard itself showed no interest, but they became extraordinarily agitated. It was found that in order to keep them in perfect condition it was only necessary to submit them to this experience from time to time. Another classical example is that of the solution to the problem of the transit of certain species of tropical fish. If one or two of their natural predators, presumably with limited appetites, are shipped in the same tank, it is found that the mortality rate is in fact greatly reduced.

To put this in human terms. In their paper, "The Quest for Excitement in Unexciting Societies," Professor Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning say categorically—"Unless the organism is intermittently flushed and stirred by some exciting experience with the help of strong feelings, overall routinisation and restraint. . . . are apt to engender a dryness of the emotions, a feeling of monotony of which the emotional monotony of work is only *one* example."

The Elias and Dunning paper is of great interest even though it makes no mention of the activities dealt with here. It suggests numerous lines of enquiry. At many points adventure sports stand half in and half out of their categories. The authors reduce the field of what is generally called leisure to a number of spheres of interest and they devote their attention chiefly to what they call the "mimetic" sphere: in this they include not only traditional games and pastimes but also the enjoyment of art, theatre, cinema and so on. But they specifically exclude "the often far from pleasurable type of excitement which people experience in seriously critical situations." Here, then, they seem to reject difficult climbing, which always tries to stand on the edge of those situations, whilst admitting less serious forms of outdoor activities. They argue that the need for the forms of recreation they are considering is not, as is sometimes suggested, recuperation, relaxation or release from tension, but the very arousal of tension in a situation in which it is not attended by the painful consequences which would accompany it in real life—in situations not entered by choice, that is. Hence their use of the term "mimetic". But clearly serious climbing *is* centrally concerned with this arousal of tension whilst mountain walking, or camping, is not.

It is not possible to consider their thesis in detail here or to attempt to relate it to our subject: but their conclusion, which is highly pertinent, is worth reporting:

> For many people it is not only in their occupational but also in their private lives that one day is the same as another. For many of them, nothing new, nothing stirring ever happens. Their tension, their tonus, their vitality, or whatever one might call it is thus lowered. In a simple or complex form, on a low or high level, leisure time activities provide, for a short while, the upsurge of strong pleasurable feelings which is often lacking in the ordinary routines of life. Their function is not simply as is often believed, a liberation from tensions, but the restoration of that measure of tension which is an essential ingredient of mental health. The essential character of their cathartic effect is the restoration of a normal mental "tonus" through a temporary and transient upsurge of pleasurable excitement.

4.

The propositions on tension and excitement made by Elias and Dunning ask to be set beside the theory of play advanced by Johan Huizinga. In *Homo Ludens* the description of play is a very wide one. One of the three broadly similar summaries offered is as follows :

> It is an activity which proceeds within certain limits of time and space, in a visible order, according to rules freely accepted, and outside the sphere of necessity or material utility. The play-mood is one of rapture and enthusiasm, and is sacred or festive in accordance with the occasion. A feeling of exaltation and tension accompanies the action, mirth and relaxation follow.

Elsewhere Huizinga makes reference to the formation of social groups and to the tendency of these groups to find means by which to distinguish themselves from the common world. He remarks also on the characteristics of beauty, rhythm and harmony in play. It might be objected that rock-climbing and mountaineering are usually too serious to be considered as play : but Huizinga's description will accommodate these situations easily :

> To dare, to take risks, to bear uncertainty, to endure tension—these are the essence of the play-spirit . . . . . Every game has its stake. It can be of material or symbolical value . . . . . a gold cup or a jewel or a king's daughter or a shilling : the life of the player or the welfare of the whole tribe.

"The life of the player." It is in precisely these most serious moments—when, on an outcrop, the hard-pressed solo climber declines the offer of a top rope : or when a leader rejects the use of a sling for aid or a peg for protection, in deference to the rules of climbing ethics—it is in these critical moments that the play element as seen by Huizinga stands out most clearly. In fact, the play rules and strategies for climbing and mountaineering have now been excellently set out by Lito Tejada-Flores. But just as climbing is taken into this net, mountain walking and high camping escape

again. The agonistic principle is not evident at all and the rules are so nebulous that they can hardly be stated. There is an objective, which is a mountain summit; or it might be that it is only a pass or a high lake; but, then, perhaps there is no real objective at all—one sets off up an unknown valley to walk just as far as one feels inclined.

5.

The concepts of travel and excitement are so limitless that any attempt to summarise them, even for the restricted purposes of outdoor education, is probably of dubious value. But a very brief restatement of the imperfectly organised material in this section might help someone else to see a more satisfactory and comprehensive arrangement.

Travel, then, can be one of the most life-enhancing of human experiences. Outdoor education attempts to copy or recreate the archetypal modes of travel in order to secure the appropriate rewards. Travel is often enlivened by interest or by excitement or by complex combinations of response. Similarly, the different styles of outdoor education and the different activities within these styles differ rather widely in the type of response by which they are characterised. Within the adventure sports, for instance, rock-climbing and mountain walking differ categorically at their extremes in their search for or avoidance of tension. Likewise they differ at their extremes in their adherence to or indifference towards competitive play-rules.

And yet, we have to add, these distinctions seem to be reduced in meaning by the aura of beauty and freedom sensed in the mountain scene. This ambience tempts us to draw together these different states of body and mind whatever their degree of extremity, though a general word for this range of feelings may be hard to fix upon or may depend ultimately on one's own approach and tastes: interest, excitement, alertness, involvement, arousal?

IMPEDIMENTS IN STYLED APPROACHES

1.

I want to reconsider now the three principal styles of outdoor education initially outlined—that dealing with the understanding of Nature, that dealing with the teaching of recreational skills, and that dealing with the reinforcement of socially valuable characteristics—with a view to exposing any tendencies which may prejudice the realisation of the values I have described. For, in fact, it does seem to me that in each approach there are elements which in their presuppositions or in their means operate against the fullest exploitation of those possibilities.

First, then, the relationship between formal fieldwork and those values with which it does not actively concern itself. I said earlier that fieldwork deals with truth and this may appear to some to be the grandest aim possible. In fact it usually deals with that simple primary sort of truth that stands or falls by verification. And so, although it exercises an essential part of the intellect, it may leave other aspects both of the mind and of the whole man unengaged.

I find it necessary to begin with an observation on a claim a field scientist might be inclined to make: that our aesthetic sensibilities are heightened by an increased understanding of Nature. Our flexible use of the word "beauty" allows us, if we wish, to speak of the beauty, perhaps, of the ecological balance in some microhabitat and even to talk about the beauty of an equation or mathematical proof. But there is surely an important distinction between the aesthetic appreciation of art and Nature and the intellectual satisfaction of understanding in itself—which is perhaps more nearly comparable with the technical aspect of criticism (being able to explain, for instance, the structure of a poem; or to describe the style of a painting). It seems to me that the aesthetic response to each separate object in a given class—poems, say, or mountains—is different whilst the intellectual gratification which follows the comprehension or recognition of matters of structure or relationship is undifferentiated and does not extend the mind in such a real sense. For this reason I do not accept the suggestion that a more expert geologist necessarily has a fuller enjoyment of the beauty of mountains than I have: it seems to me no more probable than that the gastro-enterologist should have a better appreciation of the beauty of women.

In fact it is difficult to find more than a passing reference to beauty in the published material of organisations interested in fieldwork. It seems reasonable, for instance, to take the Field Studies

Council as representing the highest aspirations of field studies. The Council's Memorandum of Association promises to encourage field studies "in the arts and the sciences with which such studies are consistent" and to provide facilities for field work "in any such arts and sciences". And certainly occasional courses in landscape painting have been offered though the operative word in all these operations is study. The Council's journal, *Field Studies*, has produced a single reference to beauty to the time of writing and this appeared in an Editorial on scientific policy. The President of the Council in 1947 is quoted as speaking of the "usefulness" of nature "to the people"; and it is remarked that he explained that this included, in the Editor's words, "the benefits arising from an increased sensitivity to beauty and harmony in our surroundings." And that is all.

Of course any reference to beauty would appear strikingly out of place in *Field Studies* for no contributor dares depart from the received style of the research papers printed. No doubt it is difficult enough to get a paper accepted and no-one is likely to prejudice his chances by incorporating extraneous matter. If some joker were to conclude his report with a note on what his lonely exercise had meant to him, or with an observation on the aesthetic aspects of the site of his research, one can imagine the perplexity and agitation the remarks might cause: the editorial committee would surely excise them. That the proper study of mankind is man, is an extreme view. Equally, it is an extreme approach to study everything that moves except oneself; and not to remark the most remarkable things about the natural world.

If, instead of looking at the learned journals that present the results of fieldwork, we were to examine the works of individual geographers and biologists a general historical tendency towards the exclusion of aesthetic and similarly personal observations would be seen. The early descriptions of travels, whilst containing much valuable information, sometimes revealed a good deal about the authors—indeed, this is often the most fascinating aspect of these works to the modern reader and he hunts around to learn something about the real man. Neither were the first recognisable fieldworkers afraid to express their wonder at what they saw. But very noticeably within the last hundred years an increasing familiarity with methodology—rather than simply the steady elevation of science—has led to the suppression of subjective material as irrelevant or dangerous. So that those fieldworkers who have felt that aesthetic enjoyment was as essential to their lives as scientific achievement have been forced into extreme positions, overstatement or silence, vehemence or apology.

2.

A single example of this tendency might be drawn from Sir Francis Younghusband's Presidential Address to the Royal Geographical Society in 1920. Younghusband's unequalled knowledge of the Himalaya and his vast experience in the collocation of surveys and reports by specialists of every kind placed him in a strong position. He chose to speak about the beauty of nature, elaborating defiantly and insistently upon his sense of the primacy of this value. At one point he referred to an earlier lecture to illustrate his attitude:

> When I was writing out the lecture which I was invited to give before the Society on "The Geographical Results of the Tibet Mission" I could not resist devoting special attention to the natural beauty of Tibet. But as I read the manuscript through I feared that this attention to Beauty would be regarded by our Society as a lapse from the narrow path of pure Geography, and that I should be frowned upon in consequence and not regarded as a serious geographer. I ought, I feared, to have devoted more attention to survey matters, to the exact trend of the mountains, and the source and course of the rivers. But looking back now I see that my natural instinct was a right one—that a knowledge of the beauties of Tibet was not only one geographical result of the Mission but the chief geographical result; and that, in fact, I ought to have paid not less but more attention, both in Tibet to noting its beauties in all their multitudinous variety, and in writing my lecture to expressing with point and precision what I had seen, so that you might share it with me, and learn what is the most valuable characteristic of Tibet.

Much of what Younghusband says needs expansion in Richards' sense and whether anything is gained by calling aesthetic experiences geographical experiences is doubtful. But many readers will sympathise with him. He believed, in fact, that he spoke for most men. Even illiterate prospectors, he tells us elsewhere, are motivated as much by love of natural beauty and love of adventure as by desire for wealth; and, in his experience, when these men had spent all they had won, when they had become confused about the details of their travels, when they had even forgotten the hardships they had suffered, the impressions that stayed with them to the ends of their lives were of the strangeness and beauty of the lands through which they had journeyed.

3.

In considering ways in which formal fieldwork may limit or frustrate some aspects of self-expression, three possibilities occur: though for some persons there may be an interrelationship between each of them.

The first of these starts from the fact that many fieldwork projects cannot be brought to a conclusion without the amassing of a large body of detail. This is more obvious the more advanced or the more specialised the work undertaken. There is a tendency, anyway, for most advanced projects to become specialised projects as the field of knowledge increases and general theories may only be proposed or improved upon by those capable of interpreting specialised material. The task of collecting, classifying and assembling appears to be fascinating to some casts of mind but is utterly boring to others; and this tedium, its impact upon mood, may well operate against aesthetic enjoyment. Perhaps, in any case, an obsession with detail or a long-term involvement with it has a depressive effect upon the sensibilities. One does see sometimes, even in the most dedicated fieldwork teachers, a sort of myopia: they can't see the trees for the wood.

For fieldwork teachers (amongst others) the penalties for lifelong specialisation have been described ably and with unusual candour by Charles Darwin in regretting that "curious and lamentable loss of the higher aesthetic tastes" which he recognised in himself towards the end of his life. When he was young, he tells us, he had drawn great delight from poetry, art and music; but in old age he lost those pleasures almost entirely and even his taste for fine scenery, he admitted, was much diminished. The only art-form from which he continued to draw full enjoyment was the novel—provided that it had a happy ending! This last stipulation is the classic and definitive sign of the collapse of the receptive mind. His further remarks show the significance he attached to his sense of loss:

> My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive . . . . . if I had to live my life again I would make it a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied could thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature.

A second difficulty with formal fieldwork for some casts of mind is that in many of its investigations the whole enterprise is too easily understood in general terms. The ponderous machinery of the experiment grinds out a result which everyone foresaw at the beginning. Consider now a passage in which Richard Jefferies weighs the achievements of scientific method and makes his own claims for the scope of mind:

> The mind is infinite and able to understand everything that is brought before it; there is no limit to its understanding. The limit is in the littleness of the things and the narrowness of the ideas which have been put for it to consider. For the philosophies of old time past and the discoveries of modern research are as nothing to it. They do not fill it. When they have been read, the mind passes on, and asks for more. The utmost of them, the whole together, make a mere nothing. These things have been gathered by immense labour, labour so great that it is a weariness to think of; but yet, when all is summed up and written, the mind receives it all as easily as the hand picks flowers. It is like one sentence—read and gone.

Some will find these remarks absurd and will question Jefferies' use of the word "understanding." But it is hardly possible to deny the justice of his claim to *comprehend* what is offered, in the broader sense of the word. Now it might be pointed out that though his statement may be true of summaries, concepts or demonstrations which can be *put before* the mind, the first discovery of these facts is a different matter arousing feelings, interests and pleasures ancillary to the process of understanding. This makes an incidental though important point on teaching method—the very point, in fact, that fieldwork for young people is concerned about: but it remains true that the gathering of evidence, whether a few simple observations or a massive and laborious task, to prove something which is not only easily credited by the mind but may also have been generally taken in by the eye from the beginning, simply will not appeal to every mentality. Regrettably, a number of the basic techniques taught as an introduction to fieldwork suffer from this limitation. And it does seem to me that the appeal of a good deal of fieldwork is restricted to certain types of intelligence and personality.

A further frustration imposed by a good deal of formal fieldwork is that of the need of many young people for fairly continuous physical exercise and the excitation of tension as described earlier. In most day-to-day situations we are able to go about our work comparatively undisturbed by these needs because distractions and alternatives are not usually on display. This is not always the case in carrying out fieldwork projects in wild country. I have seen a party of eighteen-year-old biology students who were quite desperate with frustration at having to spend an afternoon poking nets and turning pebbles in the bed of a mountain stream. The ridges and summits solicited them openly on all sides. They were only able to support their lot because they knew well enough that the way to the university lay through that stream. And I have had the privilege of climbing with geologists and botanists who plainly forgot their vocations and whose spirits soared the moment we became engaged with the intriguing difficulties of the cliff.

A hundred years ago, in describing his ascent of the Zinal Rothorn, Leslie Stephen repudiated all earlier apologies for mountaineering. " 'And what. . . . observations did you make?' will be the enquiry of one of those fanatics who, by a reasoning process to me utterly inscrutable, have somehow irrevocably associated alpine travelling with science." Stephen's answer was to make a mocking guess at the temperature—"I had no thermometer." He was sorry that he could not offer any information about barometric deviation —"we had, unluckily, no barometer." The ascent was one of the most memorable days of his life but of the view from the summit itself he could remember very little. "As for ozone, if any existed in the atmosphere, it was a greater fool than I take it for." With these words mountaineering liberated itself from science and the cheers at the Alpine Club were echoed all over Europe. Simultaneously, it liberated itself from the numerous other excuses that had been offered for so dangerous a pastime. It took its stand from that time forward, if any stand were necessary, on a flexible existentialist taste for action and experience: the values and resources of which suddenly became self-evident and self-justifying—in part, perhaps, with the appearance of Stephen's book, *The Playground of Europe*. But these independent Victorians could never have imagined the pressures specialisation was to exert upon the enjoyment of mountains in the years after the Second World War.

4.

Before turning to that specialisation another word about the writings of naturalists is needed. To allege, as I have, the existence of a historical tendency towards the exclusion of aesthetic and philosophical material is too sweeping a generalisation. Indeed, someone with a broad grasp of this literature might be inclined to dispute it altogether. And from my own reading, which in this area is not very wide, I can find new evidence to support a more optimistic view. From the writings of the past twenty years I think, for example, of the work of Robert Atkinson, William Condry and John Hillaby. Great moments stand out. Condry's *Snowdonia National Park* is controlled and dispassionate in style. The author enumerates the species and explores each aspect of the ecology of the area. But as, for instance, he pauses for a while to look at the ancient church on the hill at Llanrhychwyn we see that despite the scrupulous sobriety of the language the writing flows on an underswell as much of feeling as of knowledge: and suddenly we experience the whole passage as resounding with emotion.

John Hillaby: "Ecstasy, I know, is an unfashionable commodity. At points on the trip when I slept out under the stars or

got through the hills by means of gaps as spectacular as you can find anywhere, I can only say that it was a privilege to be there." How extraordinary to find a naturalist-antiquarian who not only responds to the spirit of place but who boasts of and positively enjoys his restless energy and concomitant appetite for food and drink. A naturalist, incidentally, who almost uniquely amongst present-day travellers describes appreciatively the girls he encounters, placing himself in the tradition of Polo and Cobbett who often comment on the women of the provinces through which they pass. No wonder that *Journey through Britain* was received with such delight.

Robert Atkinson's *Island Going*: style, intelligence, authority, certainty. The quest for Leach's Fork-tailed Petrel is nearly incidental. What comes over is a haunting evocation of the atmosphere of North Rona and a disturbing sense of the predicament of the people of the North-West.

It is worth noticing that all three of these writers are perfectly happy to spend a night out of doors. They feel completely at home in wild country. Their books, by enlisting our feelings, communicate important ideas and attitudes with a greater power and their undoubted distinction of style ought to ensure such works as these a place in any general course on modern English writing. *Journey Through Britain* has indeed become a set book for a number of educational purposes and it is hard to say what might not be achieved if bridgeheads such as this were consolidated. Above all, these books ought to be an obligatory subsidiary study for all those young engineers and technologists whose practice bears heavily on the land. It is alarming that a man can obtain a qualification in civil engineering or applied chemistry or nuclear physics without having had to read carefully, say, *A Sand County Almanac*, *Silent Spring*, and a round dozen comparable ecological classics.

5.

At the centre of the teaching of the skills of adventure sports there is a baffling dilemma. The spice of the activities derives in part from the element of adventure and unpredictability: but adventure and unpredictability are defined by risk. Obviously, when young people are being instructed in these skills it is permissible occasionally for them to suspect that they are at risk: but it is not permissible that this suspicion should be justified. The instructor can never allow minors to get into a hazardous situation. However, the instructor is always tempted, when introducing

beginners to the activity, to say that the activity itself is safe if the student learns it properly and always follows the rules. Apart from ignoring the fact that our minds will not, or cannot, allow us to follow all the rules all the time, and the fact that the beginner will later find both motivation and pressure to ignore the rules on occasion, the instructor's promise means that there is an offer of adventure without risk, which is no adventure. (Admittedly, though, it is what many of us want: when we have survived trying adventures we are often greedy to survive more—but we commit ourselves to them with more and more circumspection.)

In trying to guarantee safety the obvious approach is to ensure wider margins of safety by improving equipment and technique. This has unfortunate results in two directions. In the first instance, the recommendations rob the experience of its value in a number of ways. In mountain walking, for example, novices are assailed with advice with that tendency. Never forget the "seven essentials" of mountain walking, they are told: Always carry waterproof clothing—no more getting wet on the mountain; carry spare sweater, gloves, and so on—no more cold on the mountain; take a good torch—no more night; take watch, map and compass—no more doubt; plenty of spare food—no more appetite; never go in groups of less than three—no more solitude; leave details of your pre-planned route—no more spontaneity; study the weather forecast carefully—no more scope for judgement. Why, it has even been suggested that groups on expedition should carry alarm flares and short-wave radios: no more separation.

Of course, we do not want people, much less young people, to be cold, hungry, uncertain, alone, and so on, all at once. But to get one's feet wet is not instantaneously fatal. If this dogma is taken too seriously the whole experience diminishes to moonwalk proportions. Why bother to get out of the car at all? Why not just see a film about it? How can you feel the independence of material things that has always exhilarated travellers in wild country when, even on the simplest expedition, you are staggering under your load of consumer goods? How can you exercise your instincts, judgement and intelligence when you have foreseen and avoided the need for this exercise?

6.

The attempt to secure wider safety-margins by improvements in equipment and technique seems, in any case, to be only temporarily effective. For almost all climbers a stage is reached at which every improvement is used to enable more difficult and more hazardous

undertakings to be attempted; and the same may be true of most adventure sports. This does not mean that these advances ought not to be encouraged and utilised. It simply means that, to be honest, we ought to admit that ultimately they do not make climbers safer.

The obsession with techniques is, I think, to some extent evidence of a failure of nerve on the part of those teaching these skills. If one sets up as a teacher one has to show that there is some content in the subject professed, some considerable body of knowledge to be communicated. And it seems to me that since many teachers of recreationa' skills do not appear to be aware of the importance, complexity and self-validating nature of the values I have outlined, they do the easy thing and concentrate upon describing refinements—sometimes quite ingenious but more often of limited or unproved usefulness—in equipment and technique. From this there is following, I think, a regrettable institutionalisation of skills teaching, an attempt to make the various technical aspects of the adventure sports directly comparable with the ordinary subjects of teaching. Instructors are intimidated and at all levels they try to fit their message into stock educational formulae. The planners of courses ask themselves, and are asked, what preparation has been done beforehand what follow-up should oe programmed for afterwards? It is assumed that it is desirable that every aspect of the content should be "integrated"—a magical self-justifying word. Whilst, in truth, the most valuable and profound experiences in life are often those that stand out with most definition and least overlap, characterised by their freshness and unexpectedness. Let me make this point shortly. When Cortez marched across the causeway into Mexico he did not know what to expect. A very detailed knowledge of the city and an intimate familiarity with its culture would have shaped his strategy without doubt—though it is hard to see how he could have achieved his ends more fully in such a short time. But could it be seriously maintained that the experience of his party—its beauty, strangeness and wonder—could have been heightened *as experience* by any such knowledge?

Perhaps we might say this again in another way. In organising any sort of preparation or follow-up for a party's first visit to the hills, a certain discretion will be repaid. If one wished to see a celebrated film, ought one to study the book beforehand as preparation? Probably not; the film is an aesthetic experience in its own right and it would be a pity to anticipate and confuse that experience. Before taking young people to the hills all sorts of useful practical work can be done because the excursion includes elements other than the aesthetic. But this preparation ought not

to trespass upon matters in which an aesthetic content or an element of surprise might reside. In these matters the less we know what to expect, the greater the payoff.

If mountain activities include these delicate aesthetic elements and are artistic activities in their own right a different light may also be cast upon the possibility of some educational follow-up. If a youngster positively enjoys writing about his ascent of Snowdon, this is excellent, just as it would be if he enjoyed writing about hearing Beethoven's 7th Symphony. But the proper follow-up to hearing that symphony would be to listen to the 8th or 9th. And, similarly, the proper follow-up to the ascent of Snowdon might be the ascent of Carnedd Llywelyn—or better, some more lonely hill like Carnedd Iago.

7.

Aside from the tendency to institutionalise instruction to make it comparable with formal teaching there is also a tendency to try to reinforce the analogies between outdoor pursuits and sport—to make the whole enterprise correspond with the framework of sport. Daniel Boorstin excepts sport from the field of "pseudo-events" solely because of its uncertainty of outcome : but clearly there is an artificiality about formal games which is, in fact, able to infect outdoor pursuits. Instead of navigation through natural obstacles we are pressed to offer competitive orienteering over routes of contrived difficulty; instead of canoe trips down rivers with natural hazards we are advised to mount slalom events giving tricky manoeuvres between suspended poles. A competitive element and a spectator element have appeared for the first time hand-in-hand and without apology. The chief event in the skier's year becomes not his best day's skiing but his most important local race. Climbing walls introduce an artificial element into rock-climbing and nylon slopes import it into skiing; heated pools for preliminary canoeing instruction become desirable. And clearly, televised climbs, canoe and ski slaloms, and orienteering events share many of the characteristics of Boorstin's "pseudo-events" and "self-fulfilling prophecies"; Outdoor Education Exhibitions and Conferences show nearly all of them though they may have marginal virtues in addition.

In many of these matters the influence of the Sports Council has been a disturbing one. Why it should be supposed that mountaineering deserved or wished for a place under the same umbrella as football, athletics, shovehalfpenny or whatever, is hard to understand. However, climbers have never had much use for umbrellas; and perhaps, shortly, the kiss of death of the Sports

Council's monies will be finally declined. The absurdity of the Sport for All Campaign ought at any rate to speak for itself.

Is mountaineering anything to do with sport? Despite some affinities, the answer is no. It is impossible to find a definition of sport which will include all the values of mountaineering without also including all manner of activities which are manifestly not of a sporting nature. One of the most detailed and ambitious of recent statements on the subject is the draft *Declaration on Sport* produced by the International Council for Sport and Physical Education and launched with a prefatory message from the Director-General of UNESCO. For mountaineers, difficulties of definition begin with the first sentence of the Preamble. In fact, mountaineering is separated by many of its aspects from sport, physical recreation and physical education.

8.

Of all styles of outdoor education the Outward Bound approach has suffered the most criticism and is still regarded with distaste in some quarters. A good deal of this criticism is ill-founded. In particular, anxiety has sometimes been expressed about the safety-margin of the more exacting courses. However, looking back at the history of the schools, extending over a period of thirty years in one case, it has to be stressed that they have a really admirable record : that it is more than likely that the small number of misadventures which have been recorded would have been doubled or trebled had there been no Outward Bound Trust and had the entrants been subjected instead to the normal risks of accident at work, on the roads and in the home.

Certainly, it is not easy to take some parts of the Outward Bound mystique seriously. There is something quite hilarious about the accounts of the crises that have shaken the movement. It seems odd, for instance, that the suggestion that the activities might be offered to young women caused such head-shaking and such torturing uncertainties. It is touching to read of the simple pleasure and positive self-congratulation of those concerned after this intimidating step was taken and the girls proved that arduous mountain and sea expeditions were not beyond them. Everyone outside Outward Bound and interested in climbing or sailing knew this already : but the promoters of these courses seem to have felt that they had made an important discovery. The movement sometimes seems to show a rather inbred nature, an anxiety about any kind of change. Such simple proposals as the replacement of the athletic tests by circuit training and the revision of the badge

system caused the most heated argument and involved months of acrimonious discussion. The outsider finds it hard to see what the revolution was about. In each case, however, there was a victory of some sort, however tiny, against the wooden conservatism of the founders.

The real misgivings about Outward Bound ideas begin with a number of semantic problems. A characteristic vocabulary has been stated already : endurance, courage, self-sacrifice, service, leadership, promptitude, achievement, challenge, discipline. The first impression is that there is something wildly inflated about this vocabulary and then we notice a circularity or repetitiveness in its manipulation which makes the reading of Outward Bound apologists a rather unrewarding experience. It might be said that those who are disconcerted by these terms are simply demonstrating their cynicism and their alienation from received values. There may be some truth in that; but the core of the difference is something else. The words strung together above have a coherence about them, a feeling of consonance within a particular scheme of thought, which tempts us to group them together. However, they really relate to some quite different classes of abstract concepts, qualities and relations. Some describe comparatively trivial matters of habit or manners in which conceivably it is possible to give training. Others deal with higher modes of behaviour, aspects of relationships between the individual and that which is outside himself—nature, other individuals, institutions felt as having a clear identity, and so on. But some of the words in this last group have strong moral connotations which derive from their ordinary application to situations or confrontations which have not been entered voluntarily or for fun : yet these words are used here in a sphere which is not related to morality in any ordinary sense. As an example, the word "courage" may be used to describe a quality of the climber who tackles an intimidating rock problem. Although this quality may appear to the uninitiated to be helpful in this situation it is hard to see how it can justifiably be used here. A string of alternatives such as boldness, persistence, audacity, recklessness, irresponsibility and folly might be more appropriate in any given circumstance. The lowest terms in this scale are never used and it is the slanted nature of the description that leads to the feeling that the sense of the words is being debased, rightly arousing our suspicions. When we find ourselves forced to reflect upon each word in this manner the search for meaning becomes exhausting.

9.

A further difficulty is that even if we allow the words their hig .cst values we still find cause for concern. When such an abstract

value as loyalty, as one example, is recommended we are bound to ask to what gods or masters this tribute must be paid. The vocabulary, in fact, is typically that of excluding or self-defining bodies—the family, the peer group, the business enterprise and, ultimately, the nation. The concept of loyalty is nearly impossible unless an enemy, a competitor or a tempter is named : but neither friends nor enemies are defined. Almost every one of the abstract virtues listed could be put to unworthy ends. Without discrimination they are not virtues at all : but discrimination is not on the programme.

Why is discrimination not on the programme? Surely, because to discriminate one has to say concretely what is good and bad and this might cause embarrassment. It would be absurd to claim that an adventure course is likely to create a stronger sense of family ties or group loyalties in any really valuable sense. We could urge an unswerving devotion to our employers but the nature of a large proportion of the work available in modern societies exempts the promotion of business efficiency from consideration as an aim of humanistic education. We have religion, too, and since in this country it is a multilateral but comparatively amicable affair a non-denominational service is provided : any god will do. In the end we have the nation and the language *is* the language of nationalism. But since it is dangerous to present a nationalistic message in this country at present the point of the exercise is not mentioned. To match the non-denominational religion we are offered a non-denominational nationalism—any state will do—and it is this that lends the vocabulary its peculiar hollowness. The framework might be used in any country to suit any national aspirations—in Communist China just as easily as in Capitalist America.

10.

At this point some readers may feel that the writer ought to stop for a deep breath : that he should perhaps relax a little. Why all this flailing away at the verbal world of Outward Bound when the real world might engage our attention more profitably? Well, the relationship between verbal worlds and real worlds is elusive and not easily agreed upon—as the unfinished debate on pornography testifies. It may be that a young person out on a solo map scheme has escaped the verbal world entirely. This is an extremely difficult question. Perhaps, in any case, the unchaperoned student is reviewing at his leisure the verbal and actual worlds of Outward Bound together with all other worlds, as hoped earlier in this essay. Nature may be subverting the work of the Character Builders at every step.

But the verbal world of Outward Bound certainly does inform the movement's method. Training conditions are recommended, pledges of abstinence are expected, morning parades are obligatory. Competition and the patrol system are an essential feature of the courses, focussing attention upon the idea of the team and depending upon the existence of rival teams. The whole tendency and drive is towards the *strengthening* of the individual—but perhaps he really needs unwinding or diversifying? The tendency is towards united groups with leaders and followers—I would rather have men who can do without either. The aim is to create men of admirable character: but if we consider those of our acquaintances whom we admire we have to admit that their characters could never have been *built*—not, at any rate, by consciously programmed experiences and perhaps (another great dilemma) only by the sorts of experiences no-one would want to programme.

Still, when all is said, something good and original may come out of Outward Bound yet. There is a new generation of teachers in the schools now, not quite so shackled, perhaps, by the obsessions of Kurt Hahn. And finally it ought to be added that organisations with ideals in writing are easier to criticise than those without a written message. There is a sense, too, in which a part of any argument about Outward Bound objectives may be only the ancient dialogue on ends and means. We see this more clearly in looking at the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme which has some affinities with Outward Bound. Surely it is true to say that in our culture young people are more willing to compete for symbols than to seek new experiences for their intrinsic value. How far ought we to go in pandering to a craving for badges? Sometimes on the hills we meet the forlorn expeditions in pursuit of the Bronze or Silver or Gold Awards. We tell them that it doesn't matter, the journey is the important thing: but we see that, like the Spanish Conquistadors, if they don't get the gold they become angry, depressed and frustrated. And yet, if what Younghusband said of his prospectors is true, something of value must remain: a memory of mountains.

HAS OUTDOOR EDUCATION ANY FUTURE?

1.

One wonders what to say now to the slow or anxious reader who has opted to join us at this title. To judge from a conclusion whether an argument may be worth looking at is certainly a labour-saving practice though it carries attendant risks. Is it possible anyway to make a useful summary of such an abstract and piecemeal discussion? Perhaps it might be better to begin by asking about the uses of wild country.

An Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman went to camp in a high cwm. They set up their tent in the early afternoon and ate a colossal meal. The weather was splendid, neither too cold nor too hot. The surroundings were magnificent. Several hours remained before darkness. What were they to do?

One of the party might have enjoyed himself thoroughly if he had had with him his *Excursion Flora* and his *Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*. A second would have been absolutely contented if he had had rock-climbing gear and an expert companion. The third wanted nothing so much as his camera in order to capture an extraordinary sequence of cloud effects. . . . . That was the start of a joke about Human Variability. The reader is invited to complete it or to rewrite it to his taste. In real life, of course, the campers would have come prepared by prior discussion though that need not preclude subsequent disagreements on how best to employ themselves. The temptation to tease those impatient for easy answers on the purposes of outdoor education is anyway irresistible.

Clearly, styles of outdoor education must vary widely according to circumstances. Firstly, they must be dependent upon the possibilities offered by the particular terrain available. Secondly, they should be related to a number of aspects of the environment from which the youngster comes. But thirdly, I want to emphasise, they ought to take notice of the individuality of the student.

In the terms of an old educational analogy the child is considered as clay, jug or flower. Character building may be seen as closest to typifying the first possibility—the educator has decided what he wants and he is going to shape the raw material to his design. The teaching of techniques and the communication of factual information, whether about Nature or about recreational skills, comes closest to the second—the educator has the empty vessel before him and he is going to fill it to the brim. These are crude metaphors and no doubt unfair but they bring out the third possibility. All clay can

be moulded and every vessel can be filled in identical fashion. Living things, however, are never identical and they contain their own programmes; they must simply be protected from what is harmful to them.

It has been proposed from studies of animal behaviour that "the level of a species' evolutionary development may be judged from how far the mentality of an individual differs from others of the same species." Correspondingly, Read takes the purpose of education to be "to foster the growth of what is individual in each human being, at the same time harmonizing the individuality thus educed with the organic unity of the social group to which the individual belongs." This definition admittedly has the properties of a seesaw, to be weighted as one pleases: but it has the merit of allowing individual claims the same potential importance as social claims.

Has outdoor education any future? In one sense, of course it has. The remarkable development of the last few years is only the beginning. There will be more and more Mountain Centres, more and more schools and colleges with properties of their own in the hills, more and more courses for students and teachers, more and more Advisers advising and Organisers organising: more and more certificates. In the idiomatic sense I am less certain that outdoor education has a future. Ten or fifteen years ago it felt like the most promising experiment in British education. There was a degree of freedom about it which made it more progressive than the Progressive Schools. But an unimaginative pressure for standardisation ("in the interests of consistency"—why?) has exercised a repressive influence upon the experiment.

2.

In the outdoor pursuits approach, in order to take the fullest advantage of all possibilities we must arrange first that the teachers are not processed. We must restructure the various outdoor pursuits qualifications to encourage variety and experiment rather than to secure uniformity of approach. We must abandon any qualification system which is becoming insubordinate to the experiences it attempts to measure. We must take steps to ensure that Centre Wardens and Instructors are drawn from as many different fields of teaching as possible and that we do not suffer from a preponderance of scientists and physical educationists. It is high time that, to keep the balance, Colleges of Art began to run outdoor education courses.

If the teachers are not processed it will be easier to ensure that the students are not processed. We must diversify the programmes and arrange, with adequate safeguards, that young people are able to spend a little time alone without any project whatsoever: no difficult map and compass scheme, no huge sack filled with survival gear, no insulation by the company of others from the personal confrontation with Nature. We should try to arrange that they see a particular area at different seasons, even if only briefly, rather than see it only once for a longer spell. We must always try to prevent our programmes from turning what should be natural, direct and immediate into a contrived experience.

We should try to retain at least that degree of autonomy that already exists in Mountain Centres. Above all, we should turn for our interpretation of the values of outdoor activities to men and women who have enjoyed and are enjoying wild country outside any teaching context—to those who have written about it in the past and to the climbers, sailors and naturalists of today.

Sometimes, there is a temptation to propose outdoor education itself as an autonomous province, incorporating recreational and travel skills, biological and geographical studies, matters of aesthetics, ecology, conservation and whatever. But some of the more specialised of these disciplines belong partly to the classroom or laboratory. And since many classroom teachers now agree that theoretical work is essentially completed by practical experience, it seems likely, as well as right and good, that these teachers will extend their own spheres of action to include the use of wild country: rather than hand over to yet another emergent priesthood.

This writer's prepossessions will have become obvious by now. If I have a sympathy for any new model or ideal it is for something like the Incidental Education of Paul Goodman. Unluckily, the subject of this pamphlet was one of the very few areas of contemporary education and culture on which Goodman did not express himself. Nevertheless, any young instructor in a Mountain Centre will feel on familiar ground in Goodman's world. He will recognise himself in the teacher who abandons the classroom and who, with ten youngsters, explores his neighbourhood intensively day after day—like "the Athenian pedagogue, touring the city with his charges." And he may see himself again in the artist, artisan or scholar who is spared all self-questioning about the proper use of his authority. "He says do or don't do with a clear conscience" —because he has a real stake in the enterprise; and the group having once accepted the commitment, the value of his expertise, underscored by criteria of safety, is clear to everybody. Above all,

Goodman's insistence that virtually all trades and professions are better learned by apprenticeship than by college courses has urgent relevance for outdoor education—which is showing a tendency to imitate all the absurdities of ordinary teacher training. It may be that in the long run Ivan Illich and the de-schoolers will have most to say to outdoor educationists; unless, not impossibly, the ideas begin to flow the other way.

3.

In the end I have to say why I put such a high value upon the aspects of outdoor education I have tried to describe. It seems to me that the three formal approaches originally outlined would be considered worthy of encouragement—with minimal modification and subject to the availability of capital—by every Minister of Education on earth. This leads me to suspect that there is nothing very unusual or revolutionary about their content. But I can imagine that more profound and experimental approaches might be attempted, starting with the widest possible freedom of choice and allowing time for reflection about nature and man. These, I think, would not gain so wide an assent. ("I deny altogether that idleness is an evil," Jefferies said, "or that it produces evil, and I am well aware why the interested are so bitter against idleness—namely, because it gives time for thought and if men had time to think their reign would come to an end.") To my surprise I find myself reflecting that this country may be one of the few in the modern world in which humanistic, multi-cultural, politically useless educational experiments can be argued for, could be afforded, and might even be overlooked.

I concluded my original argument twelve months ago by confessing that that reckless essay had been written in great haste. I tried to excuse some astounding generalisations and some audacious half-truths by saying that I did not have the time or the facilities to write the careful study I would have preferred to have attempted. I described my essay as the best thing ever written on the subject, adducing as proof my own assertion that nothing on these lines had previously been published. I remarked that I was not attempting to discredit particular approaches to outdoor education but rather to provoke a broader discussion on the subject.

A year later, it having proved necessary to reprint the booklet, a few words might be added. Various correspondents have let me know that they have far superior efforts well in hand and one or two have let me see synopses of great interest. It seems possible that a considerable literature relating to these matters may be

about to appear. In fact, I am slowly assembling a wider work myself, its general scope outlined by a provisional title, Education and the Mountain Experience. I have not, therefore, thought it worthwhile to try to improve the structure of the present piece. But I have been unable to resist the temptation to interpolate a good deal of new material in places where it would fit easily, so that the pamphlet has grown substantially in length. In spite of the novelty of some of this material the closing remarks of the original text can stand. In the end, whether we choose to treat Nature as a Greased Pole or as a Visual Aid or as a Personnel Selection Test may be a matter of predilection. But the ultimate virtue in each approach depends primarily, to my mind, on how far it leaves us able to enjoy two discrete aspects of our relationship with Nature : those ancient, subversive, anarchistic values, beauty and freedom.